

September, 1931

STRANGE TALES

25 cents

SEPTEMBER

STRANGE TALES

OF MYSTERY

AND TERROR

25¢ IN CANADA 30¢

THE PLACE
OF THE PYTHONS
BY ARTHUR J. BURKS

A
CLAYTON
MAGAZINE



Also
RAY CUMMINGS
VICTOR ROUSSEAU
GORDON MAC CREAGH
S. B. H. HURST
CAPT. S. P. MEEK

Announcing **GENUINE BLUE WHITE DIAMONDS** at lowest prices IN YEARS



FC 48... Engraved, Bridal Blossom 18-K Solid White Gold "step" model Wedding Ring. Seven (7) matched genuine blue-white diamonds. Only \$2.65 a month.

FC 51... Dazzling cluster of seven (7) matched genuine blue white diamonds; baguette effect, square prong ring. 18-K Solid White Gold. Looks like \$750. solitaire. Only \$4.90 a month.



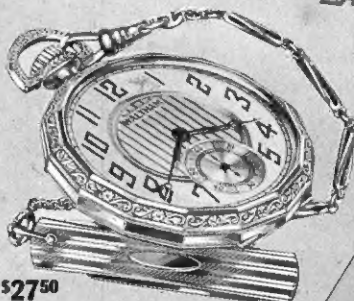
FC 49... Richly hand engraved prong ring of 18-K Solid White Gold, with a perfect, genuine blue-white diamond in center and 2 matched genuine diamonds on sides. Only \$4.90 a month.



FC 53... Diamond Wrist Watch. Two genuine diamonds and four Sapphires or Emeralds. Engraved 14-K Solid White Gold case. Guaranteed 15-jewel movement. Open link bracelet to match. Only \$3.35 a month.



FC 42... Nationally advertised Waltham or Elgin; guaranteed accurate and dependable. Engraved white permanent case, open link bracelet to match. Only \$2.10 a month.



FC 19... Nationally advertised, guaranteed 15-jewel Waltham movement; 20-year warranted, engraved White Gold filled, 12 size, thin model, decagon case. White Gold Filled knife; fine Waldemar chain. All complete. Only \$2.65 a month.



FC 54... The "Love-Link"—new, square prong, engagement ring, with the elegance and grace of much higher priced rings. Exquisitely hand engraved; 18-K Solid White Gold mounting; perfect, genuine blue-white diamond in center and 4 matched genuine diamonds on sides. Special terms; \$5.00 with order. Only \$7 a month.



FC 55... "American Girl"—beautifully engraved White Gold filled rectangular case. Guaranteed 15-jewel movement. Flexible wristacrat bracelet to match. Sapphire set stem. Only \$1.87 a month.



FC 40... "Lone Eagle" Dedicated to Col. Chas. A. Lindbergh—Handsomely engraved white permanent case, with a guaranteed 15-jewel BULOVA precision movement. Radium hands and dial. Patented "dust-tite" protector. Link bracelet to match. Only \$3.85 a month.



CATALOGUE FREE TO ADULTS

Send for copy of our latest catalog showing special values in genuine blue-white diamonds from \$25. to \$1,000. and standard watches from \$12.50 and upward. Write now to get your free copy.



FC 39... "America's Sweetheart"—Ultra modern 18-K Solid White Gold engagement ring; genuine blue-white diamond in center, 6 matched diamonds in engraved "step" effect sides. Only \$4.75 a month.



FC 34... Richly hand - engraved 18-K Solid White Gold solitaire mounting; with fiery, genuine blue - white diamond. Only \$2.40 a month.



FC 50... Gentlemen's massive, "step" effect ring; 18-K Solid White Gold or 14-K Solid Green Gold. Set with a perfect, genuine, blue-white diamond. Special terms; \$5.00 with order. Only \$7.00 a month.



DIRECT DIAMOND IMPORTATIONS AND OVER \$2,000,000 in orders yearly in our national mail order and retail chain store system, give us tremendous advantages in the world's most important buying markets—these benefits we pass on to you in the greatest values, lowest prices in our history.

HOW TO ORDER—Just send \$1.00 with your order and your selection comes to you on 10 Days Free Trial. No C.O.D. to pay on arrival. After full examination and free trial, pay balance in 10 equal monthly payments.

Satisfaction Guaranteed 10 Days Free Trial

You have the privilege of 10 days free trial—if not completely satisfied return shipment at our expense and the entire deposit will be refunded. Written guarantee bond accompanies every diamond and watch purchased.

All Dealings Strictly Confidential No Embarrassing Investigations

Nearly a year to pay! No extra charge for credit—no red tape—no delay. You take no risk—satisfaction absolutely guaranteed or money back.

Residents of New York City and vicinity, who prefer, are invited to call in person at our salesrooms for these marvelous values.

ESTABLISHED 1895

ROYAL DIAMOND & WATCH CO.

ADDRESS DEPT. 43-W
170 BROADWAY, NEW YORK

...Raised His Pay \$4800 After Reading This Amazing Book Which Is Now FREE!

*Based on the combined experiences of F. B. Englehardt, Chattanooga, Tenn.; A. C. Wallahan, Huron, So. Dak.; L. Van Houten, Grand Rapids, Mich., and many others.



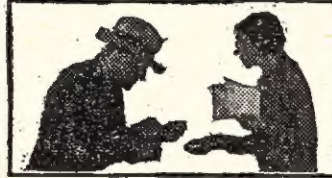
Caught in a Rut

I wonder I put up with it as long as I did! Every day was filled with nothing but deadly routine and monotonous detail. No freedom or independence. No chance to get out and meet people, travel, nor have interesting experiences. I was just like a cog in a big machine with poor prospects of ever being anything more.



Long, Tiresome Hours

Every hour of the day I was under somebody's supervision. The TIME-CLOCK constantly laid in wait for me—a monument to unfulfilled hopes and dying ambition. Four times a day, promptly on the dot, it hurled its silent challenge at my self-respect, reminding me how unimportant I was and how little I really COUNTED in the business and social world!



Low Pay

Paid just enough to keep going—but never enough to enjoy any of the GOOD things of life every man DESERVES for his family and himself. Always economizing and pinching pennies. Always wondering what I would do if I were laid off or lost my job. Always uncertain and apprehensive of the future.



Desperate

Happened to get a look at the payroll one day and was astonished to see what big salaries went to the sales force. Found that salesman Brown made \$200 a week—and Jenkins \$275! Would have given my right arm to make money that fast, but never dreamed I had any "gift" for salesmanship.



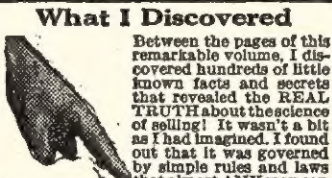
A Ray of Light

Stumbled across an article on salesmanship in a magazine that evening. Was surprised to discover that salesmen were made and not "born," as I had foolishly believed. Read about a former cowpuncher, Wm. Shore of California, making \$525 in one week after learning the ins-and-outs of scientific salesmanship. Decided that if HE could do it, so could I!



The Turning Point

My first step was to write for a certain little book which a famous business genius has called "THE MOST AMAZING BOOK EVER PRINTED." It wasn't a very big book, but it certainly opened my eyes to things I had never dreamed of—and proved the turning point of my entire career!



What I Discovered

Between the pages of this remarkable volume, I discovered hundreds of little known facts and secrets that revealed the REAL TRUTH about the science of selling! It wasn't a bit as I had imagined. I found out that it was governed by simple rules and laws that almost ANY man can master as easily as he learned the alphabet. I even learned how to go about getting into this "highest paid of all professions." I found out exactly how Mark Baruchievich of San Francisco was enabled to quit his \$8 a week job as a restaurant-worker and start making \$125 a week as a salesman; and how C. W. Birmingham of Dayton, Ohio, jumped from \$15 a week to \$7600 a year—these and hundreds of others! It certainly was a revelation!



FREE Employment Service

Furthermore, I discovered that the National Salesmen's Training Association, which published the book, also operates a most effective employment service! Last year they received requests from all over the U. S. and Canada for thousands of city, traveling and local salesmen trained by their method. This service is FREE to both members and employers, and thousands have secured positions this way!



Making Good At Last!

It didn't take me long to decide to cast my lot with N. S. T. A.—and after a few weeks I had mastered the secrets of Modern Salesmanship during spare time, without losing a day or a dollar from my old job. When I was ready, the Employment Manager found me over a dozen good openings to choose from—and I selected one which paid me over \$70 a week to start!



Was It Worth It?

Today my salary is \$4800 greater than ever before! No more punching time-clocks or worrying over dimes and quarters! NOW my service are in REAL DEMAND with bigger prospects for the future than I ever dared HOPE for back in those days when I was just another "name" on a payroll!



Get Your Copy FREE

Right now the book—"The Key to Master Salesmanship"—which banished all my fears and troubles and showed me how to get started on the road to success and independence—will be mailed as a gift to any ambitious man, absolutely FREE. And since there is no obligation, why not see for yourself what amazing facts it contains? Just mail the coupon now for there is no better way in the world to meet a 2-cent stamp! I KNOW!

National Salesmen's Training Assn., Dept. M-794, N. S. T. A. Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

National Salesmen's Training Assn., Dept. M-794, N. S. T. A. Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

Without obligation, please send me a free copy of "The Key to Master Salesmanship." Also include full details of your training and Free-Employment Service.

Name..... Address.....

Town..... State.....

Age..... Occupation.....

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**Issued
Every**



**Other
Month**

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HARRY BATES, Editor



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That the stories therein are clean, interesting, vivid, by leading writers of the day and purchased under conditions approved by the Authors' League of America;
That such magazines are manufactured in Union shops by American workmen;
That each newsdealer and agent is insured a fair profit;
That an intelligent censorship guards their advertising pages.

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VOL. I, No. 1

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Yearly Subscription, \$1.25

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I will train you at home



**Here's
Proof**

to fill a

BIG PAY Radio Job!



I will give you my new 8 OUTFITS
of RADIO PARTS for practical
Home Experiments.

If you are earning a penny less than \$50 a week, send for my book of information on the opportunities in Radio. It is free. Clip the coupon NOW. Why be satisfied with \$25, \$30 or \$40 a week for longer than the short time it takes to get ready for Radio?

Radio's growth opening hundreds of \$50, \$75, \$100 a week jobs every year

In about ten years Radio has grown from a \$2,000,000 to a \$1,000,000,000 industry. Over 300,000 jobs have been created. Hundreds more are being opened every year by its continued growth. Many men and young men with the right training—the kind of training I give you—are stepping into Radio at two and three times their former salaries.

You have many jobs to choose from

Broadcasting stations use engineers, operators, station managers and pay \$1,200 to \$5,000 a year. Manufacturers continually need testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, service men, buyers, for jobs paying up to \$7,500 a year. Shipping companies use hundreds of Radio operators, give them world-wide travel with board and lodging free and a salary of \$80 to \$150 a month. Dealers and jobbers employ service men, salesmen, buyers, managers, and pay \$30 to \$100 a week. There are many other opportunities too.

So many opportunities many N. R. I. men make \$200 to \$1,000 while learning

The day you enroll with me I'll show you how to do 23 jobs, common in most every neighborhood, for spare time money. Throughout your course I send you information on servicing popular makes of sets; I give you the plans and ideas that are making \$200 to \$1,000 for hundreds of N. R. I. students in their spare time while studying. My course is famous as the course that pays for itself.

Talking Movies, Television, Aircraft Radio are also included

Special training in Talking Movies, Television and home Television experiments, Radio's use in Aviation, Servicing and Merchandising Sets, Broadcasting, Commercial and Ship Stations are included. I am so sure that I can train you satisfactorily that I will agree in writing to refund every penny of your tuition if you are not satisfied with my Lessons and Instruction Service upon completing.

64-page book of information FREE

Get your copy today. It tells you where Radio's good jobs are, what they pay, tells you about my course, what others who have taken it are doing and making. Find out what Radio offers you, without the slightest obligation. ACT NOW!

**J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute Dept. 1JM
Washington, D. C.**



\$100 a week

"My earnings in Radio are many times greater than I ever expected they would be when I rolled. They seldom fall under \$100 a week."
E. E. WINBORNE,
1267 W. 48th St.,
Norfolk, Va.



Jumped from \$35 to \$100 a week

"Before I entered radio I was making \$35 a week. Last week I made \$110 servicing and selling Radios. I owe my success to N. R. I."

J. A. VAUGHN
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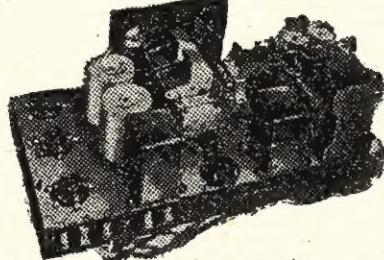
\$500 extra in 6 months

"I find I made \$500 from January to May in my spare time. My best week brought me \$107. I should have taken it long ago."

HOYT MOORE
R. R. 3, Box 919,
Indianapolis, Ind.

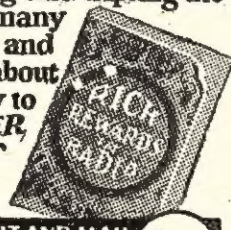


Back view of 5 tube Screen Grid A. C. set—only one of many circuits you can build.



I am doubling and tripling the salaries of many in one year and less Find out about this quick way to

**BIGGER
PAY**



FILL OUT AND MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY

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Washington, D. C.**

Dear Mr. Smith: Send me your free book. I understand this request does not obligate me and that no salesman will call.

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Lifetime Employment Service to all Graduates

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**"I Had a Waistline
Like His.
I Got Rid of It
This Easy Way."**



"I have worn Director Belt. I have reduced my waistline eight inches," says J. P. Long, Lebanon, Pa.

THE Director puts the loose, fallen abdominal muscles back where they belong, and you immediately take on a slender, athletic appearance. Then, its gentle changing pressure on the abdomen brings results similar to regular massage, scattering the fat and giving strength and firmness to the waistline while the replacement of the muscles relieves the strain on the digestive organs. This means better assimilation of food and improved elimination. In thousands of cases the improvement has not only been immediate but has become permanent.



Don't continue to look this way

**Slip the DIRECTOR On—
That's All**

Now you can quickly, easily and surely rid yourself of a bulging waistline. Thousands of men who sent for the Director on our trial offer have proved its value for reducing the waistline; and letters from physicians recommend it as a *natural*, commonsense way to obtain the desired results.



The *Director* is fitted to your measure all in one piece. There are no buckles, laces nor straps to bother you. Light and compact, lies flat, worn with ease and *comfort*, cannot be seen.

SENT ON TRIAL

Let us prove our claims. We'll send a Director for trial. If you don't get results you owe nothing. You don't risk a penny. Write for trial offer, doctors' endorsements and letters from users . . . Mail the coupon **NOW!**

LONDON & WARNER, 360 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago

Gentlemen: Without cost or obligation on my part please send me details of your trial offer. Dept. F-3

Name

Address

The "Director" will give you a waistline like this

WING AWAY Free as the Birds

SWING out over the roads and trails where adventure lurks. Speed away from the humdrum of sweltering streets and jammed highways.

Join the good fellows who spend their play hours on Harley-Davidsons — free as skylarks, and as gay. Ride out to the lake with them — or on a week-end tour — you'll be welcome.

Vacation time is at hand — and what a wonderful one you'll have, with your swift Harley-Davidson!

Do you know how *easy* it is to buy a motorcycle now — and how *little* it costs to run?

Ask your nearby Harley-Davidson Dealer about his Pay-As-You-Ride Plan.



Mail this coupon for free literature showing our 1931 Twins, Single, and Sidecar.

Ride a
HARLEY-DAVIDSON

MAIL THE COUPON

Harley-Davidson Motor Company
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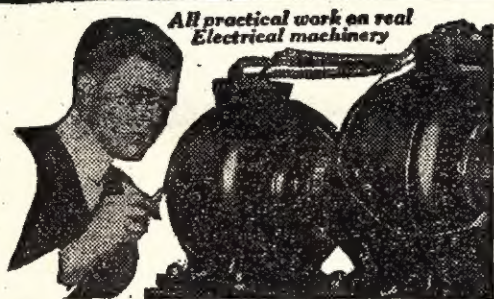
Interested in your motorcycles. Send Literature.

Name

Address

My age is ☐ 16-19 years, ☐ 20-30 years, ☐ 31 years and up, ☐ under 16 years. Check your age group.

Get Into One Of These BIG PAY FIELDS



*All practical work on real
Electrical machinery*

Amazingly Easy Way to Get Into ELECTRICITY

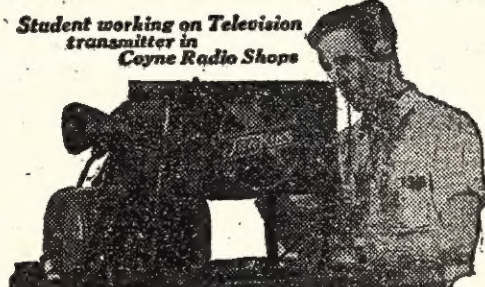
Dissatisfied with your job? Not making enough money? Then let me show you an amazingly easy way to get into **ELECTRICITY**, where thousands of Trained Men are drawing down Big Pay envelopes every week. Coyne has been training men for the Electrical Industry since 1899. Let Coyne help you to a place in this money making field!

PRACTICAL WORK IN THE GREAT COYNE SHOPS

Come to Coyne in Chicago and learn one of these two great Trades the **QUICK and PRACTICAL** way—**BY ACTUAL WORK ON ACTUAL EQUIPMENT**. In the Electrical School you are trained on huge motors, generators, switchboards, auto and airplane engines, etc. No useless theory! The average time to complete the

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When you complete the course, we'll do all we can to help you find the job you want. We employ three men on a full time basis whose sole job is to help secure positions for our students. And if you are a little short on funds, we'll try and help you secure part-time work while at school. Some of our



*Student working on Television
transmitter in
Coyne Radio Shops*

Learn RADIO TELEVISION TALKING PICTURES

Prepare for jobs in Service Work, Broadcasting, Talking Pictures, Wireless Operating, etc. Get in on the ground-floor of Television! Radio has grown in a few years from a mere experiment to a **BILLION DOLLAR** industry. Scores of jobs are open to the Trained Man. Prepare for them now by actual work at Coyne!

Course is only 12 weeks. In the Radio School the average time is 10 weeks. Here we have complete Radio, Broadcasting, Television and Sound Reproduction equipment. Everything that is necessary to make your training as nearly complete, practical and resultful as possible! And, you need no advanced education or previous experience.

students pay a large part of their living expenses that way. But get all the facts! Select the field you like best and mail one of the two coupons below. Let me send you either my Big Free Electrical Book or my Big Free Radio and Television Book. Mail only one coupon, but be sure to mail it at once!

MAIL ONLY THIS COUPON FOR FREE ELECTRICAL BOOK

H. C. LEWIS, President
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, Dept. 61-66
300 S. Paulina Street, Chicago, Illinois
Gentlemen: Please send me your big Free Electrical Book, with 161 illustrations. This does not obligate me in any way.

Name.....

Address.....

City..... State.....

MAIL ONLY THIS COUPON FOR FREE RADIO BOOK

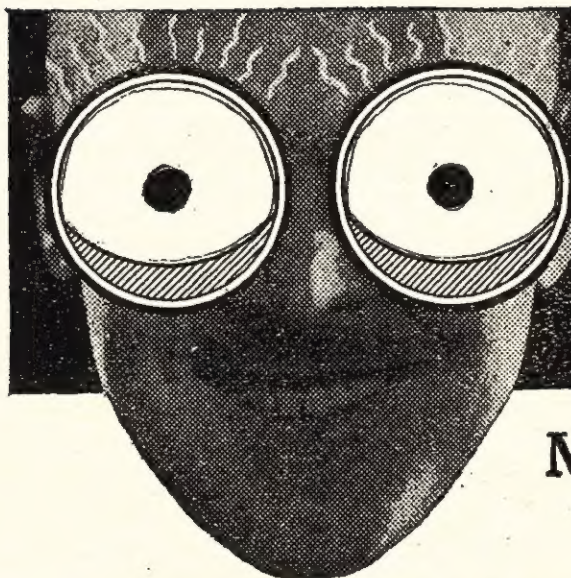
H. C. LEWIS, President
RADIO DIVISION, COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
300 S. Paulina St., Dept. 61-65, Chicago, Ill.
Gentlemen: Send me your Big Free Radio, Television and Talking Picture Book. This does not obligate me in any way.

Name.....

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City..... State.....

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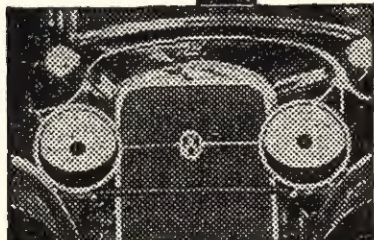


NEW KIND OF AUTO EYES

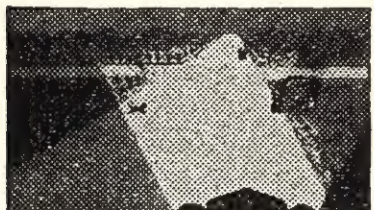
Makes Night Driving Safer Than Day!

No more driving "blind" on a crowded highway at night! An astonishing new invention banishes night wrecks and smash-ups. Ends fear of running over children or animals. Mail coupon quick for the manufacturer's introductory Free Test Offer.

**FITS ANY HEADLIGHT — ENDS DANGEROUS
DIMMING — DOUBLES ROAD LIGHT!**



This new kind of Light even LOOKS entirely different. No wonder every installation brings a dozen more sales.



Lights up entire roadway, including ditches at side. Gives perfect illumination without shadows or flickering.



Banishes Glare Shields, Spot Lights, etc. Floods the road with light, yet absolutely cannot glare.

AT LAST! An amazingly queer yet simple invention lifts the bane and curse of night driving from the motoring world. Actually like magic this altogether new discovery replaces the "bulbs" in automobile headlights with truly amazing results. Road illumination is instantly doubled, yet glare is absolutely banished. Ordinary objects in the road, ruts, animals, obstructions, etc., are made clearly visible at least three times as far. Even cuts right through fog, mist, rain and snow. Gives you a solid wall of light 3 feet high, 25 to 30 feet wide. Instead of ordinary "direct" light, this beam is composed entirely of double-reflected or "infused" light. This new kind of beam pours down the highway ahead of you so far that you can actually see to go 70 miles an hour in safety. At a 40 to 50 mile an hour clip, it is positively safer than daylight because all the light is on the road and you see nothing of your surroundings to distract you.

INEXPENSIVE

Patent rights in this new lighting invention are fully protected. It is not in any sense a new "attachment." There is no wiring or installation. No extra up-keep. In the past, millions of motorists have paid from \$10 to \$25 for

so-called spot-lights and driving-lights that at best are only make-shifts. This new method costs only a fraction as much and actually doubles road illumination with your present headlights! Cuts through the other fellow's light so you can see the road, yet absolutely cannot glare in his eyes. No wonder fleet owners, manufacturers, taxi and bus lines, etc., concerns like Wallace & Tiernan, N. J.; Blue and Gray Bus Lines; Columbus Fire Trucks, etc. are fast turning to this discovery as standard equipment. It's positively needed on every car in America, new or old, right this minute.

Offered On Introductory Test

Every driver who ever rolled half-blind down the highway at night knows exactly what such an invention means in added speed, nervous energy saved, perhaps fatal accidents banished. To prove as quickly as possible to motorists in every section what this invention will do, the manufacturer now makes a liberal FREE TEST OFFER. Simply mail the coupon for details. No obligation. Send it today.

HACHMEISTER - LIND CO.

Dept. M-550 PITTSBURGH, PA.

Agent Makes \$1,400 In One Week

Full-time and spare-time workers. New FREE DEMONSTRATION Plan with SALES GUARANTEED. EXCLUSIVE TERRITORY. Sell in bunches to fleet owners. A real chance for \$8 to \$14 very first hour, \$6,000 to \$10,000 a year. Wehner, Pa., made \$1,125 in 90 days' spare time, Owens, W. Va., made \$500 a month, Davis of Pa., made \$1,400 in one week. No limit for full distributors. Use coupon for full details of money-making proposition. It's red-hot. ACT NOW!

HACHMEISTER-LIND CO.
Dept. M-550, Pittsburgh, Pa.

Rush details of your Free Test Offer; also facts about agent's money-making opportunities without obligation.

Name.....

Address.....

Town.....State.....

Please mention NEWSSTAND GROUP when answering advertisements

Announcing— **STRANGE TALES**

It is with great pleasure that we offer this new bi-monthly magazine of Weird Fiction, *Strange Tales*, to the many lovers of fantastic and imaginative fiction everywhere.

We have wanted to bring out a magazine of this type ever since *Astounding Stories*, devoted to Science Fiction, made its successful appearance a year and a half ago. Weird Fiction and Science Fiction are the natural divisions of the literature of fantasy, and we felt it most fitting that both these themes be given their supreme expression as twin magazines under the Clayton Standard.

And now at last we have these twins, *Strange Tales* and *Astounding Stories*, true and fitting companion magazines.

You'll like *Strange Tales*, especially if you enjoy Science Fiction. There are places where the line between super-science and the so-called supernatural is very slim indeed. Vampire, leopard-men, voodoo, elemental, black magic—such stories are universally popular; and you can expect to enjoy no end those we will buy under our now-famous policy of sparing no effort and expense to secure the finest stories by the best and most outstanding authors.

We have already been given most enthusiastic cooperation by writers, artists and others interested in the Weird Fiction theme. We were surprised to learn how many well-known writers had weird stories, labors of love, tucked away against the day when they could sell them for what they felt they were worth—and surprised again to discover how many others will write such stories now that they have a highly paid quality market for them.

All this joy-labor, all this sincere writing, we bring to you.

The list of authors who so far have contributed material to *Strange Tales* reads like the American *Who's Who* of fantastic fiction. Among them are Victor Rousseau, Charles Willard Diffin, Francis Flagg, Arthur J. Burks, S. B. H. Hurst, Ray Cummings, Capt. S. P. Meek, Paul Ernst, Gordon MacCreagh, Edmond Hamilton, S. W. Ellis, Jack Williamson and S. P. Wright. Several of these have stories in this first issue. And you see that Wesso has done the cover.

So there is cause for rejoicing!

And now comes your part. Tell your friends about your new Weird Fiction magazine; insist that your newsdealer save you a copy. And write in and give us your criticisms, good and bad; we lean heavily on the advice you "associate editors" give us, and will need it to make *Strange Tales* the top of all that is best.

—The Editor.



No answer. Nothing but that defiant leer.

The Dead Who Walk

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By Ray Cummings

CHAPTER I

The Death of Kent Cavendish

YOUNG Kent Cavendish lay dying. The small boarding house bedroom was dim and silent. I sat motionless in the corner, watching the bed where Kent lay, with my sister Anne sitting beside him. He hardly seemed able to breathe, and his face, almost as white now as the

pillow on which it rested showed just beyond Anne's hunched shoulder. Anne was sobbing softly. It was the only sound in the room.

A strange business, this life. Four days ago, Kent Cavendish had been at the peak of his youth and strength; twenty-five years old, and a laughing blond giant. He was my best friend; engaged to marry my sister. We had all been so happy — until four days ago.

Through the world of the Living stalks a ghastly company, grim and purposeful—the Undead!



And now Kent was dying. Nothing could save him: the doctors were sure of it. They had tried and failed. I stirred in my chair. I had hardly moved for hours, and Anne had been sitting there by the bed all night. The dawn was coming now; we could see it at the window, its flat light paling the stars. Dr. French would return presently, but there was nothing that he could do.

Kent had been stricken by a malady strange and baffling. For a few days both Anne and I had no-

ticed him acting queerly. He seemed harassed; disturbed. I recalled saying laughingly, "Kent, what's the matter with you?" And it seemed that a wild fear, mingled with a look unnamable had leaped into his eyes. He had not answered; he had frowned finally, and turned away.

He acted queerly for a few days and then he was stricken with a sudden fainting spell that soon turned into this coma of death in which he now lay. I had done my best to question the physicians. The heart was very slow and very

weak, and stimulants had failed. It was slowing and weakening hourly, and, at the same time, the blood temperature was cooling. It was as though without illness, with his youthful body and all his organs in perfect health and strength, life was slowly draining away.

The coma was now almost catalepsy. The respiration was so faint it was hardly perceptible; the pulse could barely be felt. Scientific details! I contemplated bitterly how meaningless and futile science can be in the face of the Great Mystery.

THE dawn-light at the windows grew a little brighter. It was four o'clock—the hour Dr. French had said when all man's vital forces are at their lowest ebb and death so frequently comes to the dying. . . . Anne was still softly crying and I moved on tiptoe across the room to join her; and, with my arm about her, I murmured what comfort I could. She was disheveled, her face pale from lack of sleep. The long black tresses of her hair had fallen to her shoulders unnoticed. I smoothed them, whispering, "Poor little Anne."

We sat staring as the dawn-light crept in and lay upon young Kent's face. A weird, mysterious business this thing called life! The face was like a mask, the eyes closed, the lips slightly parted. A shell, this face, this body lying so still under the sheet. Somewhere inside it the identity of Kent Cavendish was making ready to depart. It had drawn very far back, and was now putting its house in order, this house it had tenanted for twenty-five years. Banking the fires; extinguishing them so that the house was cooling.

Back there in the dark, somewhere, it now was huddled, ready to leave. This Ego—this something which was Kent Cavendish—huddled

there, afraid, perhaps, now, at the last.

I murmured, "Anne, he's going!"

It seemed that the eyelids were twitching. And then, suddenly, they lifted. Blue windows to the house. I stared into the eyes of my friend. What was there behind those windows? The something which was Kent Cavendish, huddled there?

"Anne! He—he's going."

I held my breath, and pressed my sister tightly against me. Fearful, mysterious business, this death! Strange, weird passage, this transition which marks the mortal end of us all! We both knew it was at hand. Anne's sobs were stilled by awe for a moment, and she, too, held her breath.

The eyes stayed open. Perhaps there had been a little light there which suddenly was there no longer. Whatever the change, I knew that my friend had gone.

And Anne's sobs came again. And through her grief came her wild, protesting cry, "Oh, Kent, Kent dear, I don't want you to die! I don't want you to die!"

But Kent Cavendish was dead.

IT rained the afternoon of the funeral. The little cortege consisted of Kent's employer, Anne, myself, and a few friends. There were no relatives, for Kent was an Englishman, working in the factory of a well-known airplane manufacturer in this small New Jersey town, some thirty miles from New York City.

The slopes of the Orange Mountains lay ghostly in the mist with the somber drizzle of the rain upon them as we drove to the cemetery. The interment was late in the afternoon of a day in mid-May. The little group gathered at the grave heard the minister speak his few platitudes of praise. Anne stood beside a tree, a small, slim figure, black-garbed now, with her face

as white as the ghostly mist that hung over the graveyard.

I was with her, and neither of us spoke. Then the minister solemnly signed us to come forward. We went together, and gazed with a last, longing look at the handsome features of Kent Cavendish. It was a waxen face now; a peaceful-looking house, untenanted and closed.

A mysterious, awesome business, this death which lies at the end of the road for all of us. I stared with a last look at the face of my friend. Where was Kent Cavendish now? Like a great riddle that question has rung down the ages.

The coffin lid was fastened and the casket lowered gently to its last resting place. At the thud of the first spadeful of earth I felt a shudder sweep over Anne.

"Easy, Anne—don't give way now. Easy, girl."

She did not cry. She just stood, staring over the wet green countryside as though her gaze could penetrate the hanging white mists and reach the Beyond.

"Foolish to cry, Anne."

"I won't—I won't cry, Jack."

THE grave was filled at last, with a little mound on top. The headstone which I had already ordered would be placed there in a week. Kent's employer had said, just a moment ago, "Kent Cavendish was a fine young man. A character strong and upright. He had the will to conquer. He would have gone far had he been spared."

So strange that one like that should mysteriously be taken, and the weak, the defective, useless to themselves and to the world, live on. Who can fathom it?

The little group at the graveside moved toward their waiting automobiles. The minister turned up his coat collar, replaced his hat on his head and shivered, not because the routine affair was depressing to his

spirit, but because he was an old man and the wind off the wet mountains had a nasty chill to it. He bowed to us as he hurried toward his car, his mind on the hot coffee which his wife would have ready for him.

"Good day, Mr. Rollins—Miss Anne. He was a fine lad—the finest."

"Good night, sir," I said. "And thank you—thank you very much. Come, Anne, dear. It's over."

The wet shadows of twilight were gathering as we slowly drove away. We both gazed back at the little mound of earth as our car topped a rise of the road.

Such was the end of Kent Cavendish.

CHAPTER II

The Man in Kent's Bedroom

ANNE and I had come from a small mid-western town to work in the same factory which had employed Kent Cavendish. Anne was secretary to one of the executives, and I, like Kent, was a test pilot. We had been here in Maple Grove less than a year. Like Kent, too, we lived in the same boarding house where Kent had lived, and had died.

At nine o'clock the night of the funeral, I was alone in my bedroom when Dr. French, Kent's attending physician, called on me.

"Have him come up," I told the colored girl who came with the message. I stood up to receive the solemn, gray-haired physician.

"Good evening, Rollins. I wanted to talk to you," he said as he closed the hall door after him. "Your sister—it's something not exactly for her to hear. I've some questions I want to ask you. She isn't—"

"She's in her room, Dr. French, just down the hall; but she couldn't hear us. Sit down. She's asleep, I guess. The poor kid is exhausted."

"Quite so." The doctor seated himself. The light from the table lamp fell upon him, and I saw that for all his brusque professional manner he was nervous. His fingers trembled as he lighted a cigarette.

"About Kent Cavendish, Rollins. You're a discreet young man. What I say is in strict confidence. You know, of course, that I and my colleagues have not the faintest conception of what killed Cavendish?"

"I—I gathered so, Doctor."

"Quite so. It's a strange case—I would say unique. In writing it up for our reports, as we will, of course, we want all the information possible. You and your sister knew him best. You told me he acted strangely those few days before he was stricken. Just what did you mean by that?"

I SHIFTED uneasily in my chair and for a moment was silent. I wanted to explain, but when I tried to think what had been the matter with Kent, there seemed no words to fit my groping thoughts. Yet, undeniably, something had been wrong, for Anne, too, had noticed it and spoken of it.

"Well, Dr. French, it seems—well, I don't know just what to say more than I told you before. He did not seem himself."

What a startling thing to say! It startled me as I said it. And it startled the doctor.

"What do you mean by that?"

"I—why, nothing, I guess. I mean, it was unusual, unnatural for Kent to be anything but light-hearted. He always laughed at almost everything; he saw a laugh in life, Dr. French. He often said you could conquer life best with a laugh."

"And then he changed? Suddenly?"

"Yes. Suddenly. He seemed harassed. There was something—something the matter with him."

"Not ill?" Doctor French asked.

"No. He said he was not. He did not seem ill. I never knew anyone more perfectly healthy."

The doctor nodded gravely. "Quite so. He had a perfect body. A young giant—a perfect physical and mental specimen of manhood. Yet he was stricken and in three days he died—with nothing the matter with him." The physician gave way momentarily to his emotion. "We don't like a thing of this sort, Rollins. It makes you feel—well, baffled, helpless—ineffectual. He was not ill before he was stricken; not physically ill. Mentally ill, then, You say, harassed?"

"Harassed. I can't think of any other word, Doctor. Something was bothering him, worrying him."

"Not business?"

"No."

"Not your—sister?"

"That would be the last thing. They were ideally happy, Dr. French. I don't think—I can't imagine how Kent could have been anything but happy."

"Something less tangible, then." The physician leaned forward and lowered his voice. "I won't be secretive with you, Rollins. This Cavendish isn't the only case. He is the first, but not the last, quite evidently, for I've just been notified of another. In Summit Hill this time. A young fellow, and strong; a giant young fellow."

THE doctor's voice was extraordinarily solemn. "He's dying—he'll die of course. I was just over there to see him, and he was lying stricken, like Cavendish—dying of nothing that can be named. God, it's—it's frightening to us, I tell you. There's something weird about it—too cursedly weird."

Something nameless. To Dr. French and me as we sat for half an hour longer in the little bedroom discussing it, the thing seemed to

presage dire events. A death here in this house; another, to-night, in a neighboring town. Suppose the malady were to spread? We talked for half an hour more. Futile discussion! We were groping for the Unknown, perhaps the Unknowable, and we realized it.

When the doctor had left, I went down the upper hall and tiptoed into Anne's bedroom. She lay asleep, poor little thing, exhausted by grief. I covered her up, smoothed the tangle of her hair on the pillow, and brushed a tress of it with my lips. Anne and I had been as close, all our lives, as sister and brother can be, and I never loved her more than now.

Turning away, I pulled her door softly to a narrow crack and went back to my room. Kent's bedroom had been next to mine, with Anne's a dozen feet away. All of them were on the second floor of the big frame house.

I went to bed. It was not yet ten o'clock, but I, too, was exhausted. I left my hall door ajar so that I could hear Anne if she called. For a long time. I could not sleep, and I lay in the darkened room, listening to the melancholy drip of the rain outside the opened window and thinking over what the doctor had told me. Health and sickness, life and death—all such mysteries.

I drifted off finally, and awakened with a start. Something had awakened me! I could not imagine what, and then I thought it had been the sound of someone in the upper hall. I lay listening, and realized now that I had been asleep some hours. The drip-drip from the eaves had stopped. The night evidently was clearing; my shade, drawn partly up, disclosed moonlight outside.

HAD a step awakened me? I seemed dimly to remember it. A married couple occupied a nearby

bedroom. I was drifting off to sleep again when I heard, quite distinctly, the sound of someone moving. Then I came to full wakefulness with a shock. Someone, outside in the upper hall, was moving stealthily back and forth. Footsteps were advancing, retreating; then came a muffled thump, and the sound of a chair rasping on the floor.

I leaped soundlessly out of bed. The bedroom was dark save for straggling moonlight, and the slit of yellow glow at the partly opened door from the dim hall-light outside. I drew the door gently open. I could still hear the sound of someone moving. But now I realized it wasn't in the hall; it was in the bedroom adjacent to mine—the bedroom in which Kent had died. Someone was in there. The footsteps, the occasional movement of furniture—someone in there was busy at something.

I was unarmed. I stood a moment, listening, in the shadow of my own doorway, when the adjacent bedroom door suddenly opened inward. But no one came out.

I stiffened, waiting. I could not see into the adjacent bedroom from where I stood. But it was dimly lighted, and the glow of its light streamed into the hall. The sounds of its occupant were plainer now. Someone was in there, surreptitiously opening bureau drawers. The landlady? Why should she be packing up Kent's things or rifling his belongings at this hour.

I found myself moving quietly out into the hall. I reached presently a shadowed place from which I could see over the threshold into Kent's room. A man was packing Kent's clothes into Kent's suitcase which lay on the bed in which Kent had died. He had opened the door evidently to get more air, for as the bedroom light gleamed on his white face I saw that it was beaded with sweat.

And the man was Kent Cavendish!

CHAPTER III

Mad or Sane? Dead or Alive?

"**K**ENT! Good God—you?" It burst from me. I had had a flash of determination not to speak, but to draw back into the shadows of the hallway and watch. But the cry came from me involuntarily.

Kent stood transfixed in the center of his bedroom. I recall that in those few seconds I was aware that he was dressed in the clothes with which his body had been robed for burial—a business suit, white negligée shirt and neat bow-tie. The tie was pulled askew now and the shirt collar unbuttoned beneath it as though its constraint had choked him.

The mind receives instant impressions, flashing thoughts, crowded into a few seconds. This was Kent Cavendish unquestionably. Not someone who much resembled him, but Kent himself. For all the fantastic strangeness of it, that fact I never doubted.

"Kent!"

I found myself in front of his doorway. He had finished putting the shirts into his suitcase and stood stiffened for those few seconds. Then he turned and saw me.

"You!" His voice was low, furtive; but it was Kent's familiar voice. I could not mistake it. "You!"

"But Kent—good God! Why, Kent—"

Joy swept me. He was alive. He had not been dead. He had come to his senses and escaped from his coffin. Such things had been done before. What an experience! Horrible; ghastly. But he was alive!

I rushed to him. I recalled soon afterward a fleeting impression that he tried to escape me. He took a sudden step sidewise, but the room

was narrow between the bedside and the wall. I met him; flung my arms around him; gripped his hand. It was cold, and dank with sweat. The sweat stood in beads on his face. He was a head taller than I; and as I gazed up at him I saw a flush mount into his white cheeks.

"Kent! What happened! Why, you're alive. Tell me! Sit down. Tell me!"

I TRIED to draw him toward the bed. I was still incoherent with the shock and the joy of having him alive. But I felt him resist me; and again he said, "You!"

The only word he had uttered. Why was that? What was the matter with him? A doubt struck at me, some nameless thought that told me to be careful, to watch what I was doing. And I felt a thrill of fear. But I thrust the doubt away. A man who had just escaped from his coffin—how could I expect him not to act strangely?

He had seemed impelled to escape me; but abruptly he yielded and sat on the bed.

"You—you're surprised?"

"Surprised? Good Heavens, Kent. What an experience for you! What happened? Why, we thought you were dead. But you're not. I'll go get Anne. She—"

His hand was gripping my arm. His blue eyes searched my face and then they shifted away as though afraid of me.

"Anne? Anne?" he stammered. "She—"

"She'll be so happy. Why, Kent—"

I checked myself. The instinct, the realization came now—so strongly that I could not deny it—that I was coping with the Unknown. With my mention of Anne came a caution, a singular sensation of caution; something telling me to go slowly.

"Kent, what's the matter with

you?" I shook off his hold. "You act very strangely."

"Nothing. There is nothing ailing me. I'm all right—now."

"A horrible shock, of course. Tell me about it. You're not ill? Recovered? How did you—"

"I'm all right now. Just now, I would rather not talk of it."

"I can imagine." His words momentarily reassured me. "We'll phone Dr. French. Good Lord, it will shock him, as it did me. What an escape, Kent! Anne will be—"

MY nerves had been so shocked I was anything but master of myself or my words. I was still incoherent. But once again came that inner warning, and this time it startled me into complete alertness. The excitement dropped from me, to be supplanted by a tense wariness, for in my mind was the thought: What was Kent doing here, surreptitiously packing his things?

He said, "Be careful you do not alarm the house. No use—not yet."

I drew back from him. "All right. Whatever you say." He had lowered his voice and I lowered mine. "You're packing up. Going away, Kent?"

"Yes. Away."

He said it vaguely. He stood up, his gaze roving about the room. "Yes. Away." But he made no move; he seemed undecided what to do. Then he added. "I am very hungry. Could you—would you show me the larder, where I could find provisions?"

"Why—why, yes, Kent. Of course."

"I give you thanks."

Kent's familiar voice, but what a strange manner! And what words! The larder where he could find provisions! But Kent knew where the kitchen was; he and I had often made midnight raids upon Mrs. Green's ice-box!

The caution within me made me hold my surprise in check. "I should think you would be hungry. That's a good sign. Shall we go downstairs?"

"Yes, if you will."

"Come on then. But quietly, Kent, if you don't want anyone to hear us. I'll get my robe and slippers."

HE signed for me to take the lead. I went quickly into my own room, leaving him at my door. Those were horrible seconds to me, having him out there with Anne's room so near. I realized that I was afraid of him. It was not the old Kent. This was different, wholly different. It was Kent, physically unchanged; but mentally—wholly different. Was his mind deranged? I thought so. His horrible experience had thrown his mind off its balance. I would humor him; give him something to eat; watch my chance to telephone to Dr. French or to get help. The swift thoughts made me realize that I was shudderingly afraid of Kent now. He had always had a strength twice my own; and madmen in a frenzy, I knew, were superhumanly strong.

"What are you engaged at in there? Are you ready?"

He was peering into my dark bedroom while I fumbled under my bed for my slippers.

"Yes. Yes, I'm ready, Kent. Come on."

He followed me with quiet footsteps down the upper hall. It was horrible to have him behind me. I turned and noticed that he did not glance at Anne's room as we went by her door. We passed the upper telephone extension. I wanted to stop and call Dr. French, but I did not dare. Nor did I dare arouse the house.

"This way, Kent."

He followed me down the stairs.

I saw, as I turned toward the kitchen in the dim lower hallway where a single night light was burning, that Kent did not know his way to the kitchen. How had he entered the house? The front door was locked. Then I noticed a lower hall window open wide at the bottom and his glance upon it.

"Which way?" he demanded softly.

"Here. Follow me."

We went through the dark dining room, which had moonlight shining through its windows; through the pantry and into the kitchen, where I switched on a small light.

"Sit down there," I told him.

"Yes. I will."

HE slumped into a chair by the kitchen table. A fresh horror swept me. As I switched on the light he had almost jumped, gazing wildly around as though to avoid its glare. And as he slumped over the table I saw great beads of sweat breaking out on his face.

"Kent!"

"I—I'm all right. Will you—open that window. It is close in here."

I opened a kitchen window wide from the bottom. The night air blowing in seemed to revive him.

"Where is—the food?" he gasped.

"I'll get it. You sit still. You won't move?"

"No. Bring it quickly."

I left him and went back into the pantry and stood there a moment by the ice-box. The house was silent; everyone doubtless was asleep and no one had heard us. By the clock in the hall I had seen that the time was about twelve-thirty.

What was I to do? I stood and contemplated the possibility of arousing one of the men in the house. Together we could overpower Kent, keep him from hurting either

himself or us; hold him until the doctor came. They would send him to a hospital, no doubt. Or to an asylum. I shuddered at the word. Was he temporarily deranged, or would it be permanent?

I must have stood there longer than I realized. His low, but vehement, voice sounded, and I heard his step.

"What are you about in there?"

I abandoned my wild plans. "Coming, Kent," I called soothingly. "You sit down. I'll bring you food at once."

I heard him go back to his seat. There was the remains of a roast chicken in the ice-box, and I carried it into the kitchen.

"There you are. How's that?" I set it before him. "I'll get some bread. I could even make you a cup of coffee."

I STOOD with my blood chilling, gaping at him. He seized the chicken, tore at it, pulled off the meat and began stuffing it in his mouth, wolfing it down ravenously. I turned away, and with his eyes following me, I got bread.

"Water," he said. "Be more quiet. Would you waken the household?"

I got him water. "Easy Kent. Don't eat too much. You'll make yourself sick."

I was trembling inside. It is a most horrible thing to cope with a madman. He was my best friend, yet he seemed now a stranger; more than that, an antagonist. He ate for five minutes and the chicken was demolished; the last loaf of bread was gone, and he drank all the water I would give him.

Then he sat back and suddenly smiled. "Now I feel better. Egad, I was famished."

"Of course you feel better. Shall we—"

The words died in my throat. He was eyeing me with the gaze of a stranger. I realized suddenly that

he did not know me! Never once had he called me by name!

"Stop staring at me," he said, and burst into a laugh. "Egad, I have you frightened, little fellow. Well, let me ask you this: do you want to die?"

He was right when he said I was frightened. I drew back in my chair, but I could not escape his eyes, his gaze, which held me fascinated. And suddenly it seemed that his words were hardly those of a madman.

"You—you're joking, Kent."

"Perhaps you think so, my good man, but I doubt it. Let me tell you this: If you know what it best for you, you'll say nought of meeting me to-night. Do you understand? You would do well to forget it. Kent Cavendish is dead."

I TRIED to speak, but the words would not come. He went on softly, "I don't blame you for being frightened—gad, that's reasonable enough. But when I'm gone you must hold your tongue. That's the time to be frightened. You tell what you've seen of me to-night—and to-morrow night I'll kill you. Do you understand?"

"Yes," I gasped.

He stood up. "Sit where you are. What is your name?"

"Jack Rollins. Why, Kent—"

"You mentioned a girl. Anne—"

I froze at his look.

"Was that the girl at—my funeral? The girl with you?"

I think I nodded.

"Your sister?" he persisted. "You and she were with me—when I died?"

"Kent—" I tried to steady my whirling senses. He was at the kitchen door, opening it outward. The wild thought swept me that I must stop him. For his sake I must stop him, hold him here until I could get the doctor.

"Kent!"

"Remember, keep your mouth shut about me if you value your own hide—or the girl."

He pushed the door wide. I was on my feet at last.

"Kent, wait! Let me—talk to you!"

I made a leap for him but with incredible agility he went over the threshold and banged the door back in my face. I got it open only in time to see his bareheaded figure disappearing in the shadows of the garden trees.

He was gone. And in the silence of the garden, his wild eery laugh came floating back to me.

CHAPTER IV

The Man Who Died Twice

"DOCTOR, look here—above everything, Dr. French, this has got to be secret. He threatened me; worse, I tell you, he threatened Anne. But we've got to do something for him, roaming alone, in that condition. God knows what he might do—to himself or others."

"Tell me, carefully, Rollins, just what happened. Miss Anne, don't look so frightened, child. Surely this is better than having him dead."

"Is it?" Anne murmured. "Is it?"

"Of course it is. We'll find him, never fear, and I'll bring him around. The shock of that experience unhinged his mind. That's natural enough. A week of rest and good care will fix him."

"Of course," I agreed.

But Anne just sat staring, with a face, white as chalk, framed by her black falling hair.

"Tell me it all," Dr. French pursued. "Carefully; exactly what happened."

I told him. I think I have never seen a man so gravely intent as, without comment, he listened. He was in his middle fifties, this physician, gray-haired, smooth shaven, with a face of rugged fea-

tures; a tall, muscular fellow who all his life had been athletic. He did not once interrupt me, his intent gaze always upon my face, save that two or three times he turned to smile with a reassuring smile at Anne.

It was now about two A.M. of this same night. When Kent escaped from me, I phoned at once to Dr. French. He would have come to me, but I feared we would arouse the boarding house. He lived only a block or so away, and I told him I would bring Anne and come to him at once. A fear for Anne's safety was upon me. I did not dare leave her. I hurried upstairs, told her with a half incoherent explanation, what had occurred.

"Better, Anne—so much better than if he were dead."

I CLUNG to that angle, enlarged upon it. Indeed, for all the horror of my midnight experience, the strange fact that Kent was alive began to bring me hope. I felt too that Anne had a right to know it, to share whatever hope we could get. I had complete confidence in Anne's poise, for she was a self-reliant, purposeful girl, and mistress of herself always. We were orphans; at twenty, now, Anne had supported herself for three years. She had chosen Kent for her husband—certainly a rational choice, for in my opinion, as in hers, no finer fellow than Kent Cavendish ever lived. So now I felt she had a right to know and I told her, swiftly, but fully, everything that had happened.

By two o'clock we were dressed and in the doctor's office, and I repeated for him my story.

"Is that all?" he demanded when I paused.

"Yes."

He looked at Anne. "We must find him. It's just a temporary derangement."

Anne had not cried this time. With the helplessness of sitting at a dying man's bedside she had yielded to her feelings. But not now.

She said abruptly, "How do you propose to find him, Dr. French? Should we tell the police?"

We stared at each other. Was that the thing to do? Hunt Kent like a criminal? Suppose he were trapped and caught? He might kill himself before anyone could stop him. But more than that, there were things about the affair too wholly inexplicable. I met Dr. French's glance and I knew his thoughts were the same as mine; and both of us were concealing them from Anne.

"No," he said at last. "I hardly think we need do that, as yet." He stood up. He was only partly dressed, with dressing gown and slippers. "I have an idea, Rollins. I'll go get dressed. There is something we can do at once. Come up with me and we'll talk it over."

I caught his significant glance and I stood up. "You won't mind waiting here, Anne?"

"No," she said.

I SAT in the doctor's bedroom while he hastily dressed. He was more solemn than ever.

"Can't talk before her, Rollins. I want to go out to the cemetery; that's the first thing to do. I must see Kent's grave."

"You think he might be there? That he might go back there to his grave? You think that?"

He flung me a startled glance. "Good Lord, I hadn't. But he might. He might do anything." He faced me as he drew on his shirt.

"Suppose Kent was not dead when we buried him?" He lowered his voice to a furtive, vehement undertone. "Not dead—and coming to himself the rose from his grave, and now he's mentally deranged."

Does that satisfy you? Does it fit the facts?"

"No," I said bluntly. "Dr. French, I don't know what to think."

A dozen fantastic groping thoughts were in my mind—things unnamable, things not to be voiced.

The doctor smiled grimly. "We can't theorize; there's no use trying. The man you fed an hour ago looked like Kent Cavendish, but—"

"It was Kent."

"His body. His voice—you say you could recognize the tone, the timber of his voice?"

"Of course."

"But he did not talk like Kent. He did not recognize you, but that's nothing; a frequent symptom of insanity. He did not know the way to Mrs. Green's kitchen? That would be more unusual."

THE doctor stopped lacing one of his shoes and eyed me. "But he did not talk like Kent. 'Egad!' He used that expletive. He spoke, quite naturally, as you recount it, of the larder, and provisions. That's the way a sane man talked a hundred years ago, Rollins! Not a madman of to-day!"

What mystery was this? What chilling horror? I said, "You—you want to go to his grave now?"

"Rollins, we must try, God knows, to be rational. It's possible that you have mistaken someone else for Kent. A villain, trading on the likeness—threatening you."

But I did not think so.

"If that's the case," Dr. French went on, "the grave of Kent Cavendish will be intact. I propose to find that out, if we have to dig up the body to prove it."

"And if—if—"

"If the body is gone?" He stood up, facing me. "Rollins, has this occurred to you? Suppose we admit Kent was not dead when we buried him this afternoon. By nightfall,

down there in his coffin, he recovered his senses. That's not humanly possible, because if he was breathing at all, he would speedily have used up the little air in that coffin and died of asphyxiation before he could escape. But let's assume he lived through that. How could he lift that ton of earth out of the grave? He was six feet underground, Rollins! A ton of earth was on top of him!"

It brought me no light, but only a shudder. Dr. French was ready. "We'll take my car and drive there," he added grimly. "See what condition the grave is in. But your sister—we can't very well take her on such an errand."

But I did not feel in a mood to leave her out of my sight anywhere at such a time as this. Anne herself solved the problem; she stood fronting us as we returned to the office downstairs.

"Where are you going?"

When I stammered some incoherency, and Dr. French hesitated, she added quietly. "I think, Dr. French, that you don't quite understand me yet. I am a girl, but you haven't seen any hysteria, have you? I'm fairly intelligent, and I've been thinking this over just as you and Jack have."

WE stood speechless, gaping at her. She was trying to smile and she managed a twisted little grimace—not far from tears, for all her brave words.

"This—this thing, whatever it means," she went on, "well after all, it certainly is more to me than to either of you. To me and—and Kent. Don't you think you'd better speak plainly? Don't you think I deserve it?"

"We—we have," Dr. French stammered. He put his arm over her shoulders, but she drew away from him.

"Where are you going now?"

"To the cemetery," he said. "Anne, I do understand you. Whatever we can do for Kent, you want to take your part. But just now you cannot help us."

She turned to me. "I want to go! I don't want to stay here. I don't want to be alone; helpless while you try to do things for Kent. That's what I did at his bedside: I sat helpless. Don't make me do it again!"

"But the danger," I began. Dr. French had been fumbling in his desk. I saw him take an automatic and put it in his pocket. And Anne saw it.

"Dr. French, if this—this affair is dangerous enough to need that weapon," she said, smiling again, "then I don't want to be alone. Not to-night. Certainly there is less danger with you and Jack. And I'm not afraid of moonlit graves."

God knows it seemed to me she would be in less danger with us than anywhere else.

"You can come," I said. "Can she, Doctor?"

"Yes," he agreed.

IT was still not three o'clock when we left the house. His car was a roadster, and we three all sat in the single seat. He had brought a spade from the garage which he put in the car without comment. The night had cleared. There was no surface wind, but quite evidently nearly a gale at the higher altitudes, for the leaden clouds were riding the sky at a swift pace. The moon, just past the full, was well overhead, shining momentarily clear, then ducking behind the clouds so that great shadows moved in a rapid sweep across the countryside.

The drive to the cemetery took us less than fifteen minutes, along tree-lined, silent streets of the little suburb to a more lonely section. It was a fairly large cemetery.

Trees lined its edge along the high wire fence. It lay, partially on a hillside, with a corner of it dipping into a hollow where a stream flowed and a melancholy cluster of willows sagged their branches into the water.

There were two gates. I recalled that Kent's grave was near the main one, near a small dirt road, and not far from the clump of willows. But Dr. French did not drive into that road; instead, he stopped and parked under a tree of the main highway.

"The car is too conspicuous," he said grimly, in answer to my look. The moon was out, and by its light I saw him gaze intently into Anne's face as we climbed from the car and stood in the road.

"This isn't a pleasant business," he added, and he smiled at her. "I suppose I'm a fool, subjecting a girl's nerves to this—but, somehow I don't think so."

"Thank you," she murmured. "I'm not nervous, Dr. French."

"I don't believe you are," he retorted. And as he moved to the car and brought out the spade I heard him add to himself,—"any more so than we are."

IT was some three or four hundred yards to the nearest corner of the cemetery. There were no cars at this hour on the highway; no house in sight. We went on foot down the shadowed side road, and there seemed no one about.

"Quiet," Dr. French murmured. "We won't talk; just keep your eyes open."

We came to the corner of the cemetery, and moved slowly close beside its fence. The headstones gleamed pallid in the moonlight. Occasional family vaults stood like little marble boxes in rectangles of open space. Halfway up the hill slope a pretentious mausoleum reared itself grandly. The winding

dirt parts between the graves lay like twisting brown ribbons.

There seemed no one, nothing, prowling in the graveyard, save ourselves. We slipped through the main gate, waiting there a moment until a cloud went over the moon. It was a fair-sized solid mass. The shadow of it swept the cemetery as though some Titan were throwing great black cloaks over the shining headstones.

In the sudden darkness, we moved rapidly along the inside of the fence, down the slope toward the willows. I carried the spade; Dr. French held his revolver. The sight of it brought me a singular feeling of dread, for it seemed, then, as we prowled that shadowed graveyard, that against any antagonist we encountered here a revolver would be wholly useless.

Abruptly Anne gave a low cry. "I see it!"

"Hush!" came the doctor's low warning. "No noise!"

Anne's words made my heart leap into my throat. But a second later, I saw that she meant Kent's grave. It was opened! As we came up to it, the hole yawned black. The dirt was piled in a mound beside it, very much as it had been when our funeral cortege arrived that afternoon. And the casket was here, up on the ground surface, with its lid pried off and its interior empty.

FOR a moment, beside the opened grave, we stood gazing. None of us spoke. There was nothing to say. The thing was obvious. Kent, alive or dead, had been dug up and taken from his coffin. Someone—someone very tangible—had opened the grave and lifted out the coffin.

Dr. French whispered, "One man couldn't do that, much less Kent from inside. Several men, probably, since it must have been done in a hurry during the early evening. Well, Rollins—"

He checked himself abruptly. Anne's hand went to her mouth to stifle her startled cry and we all of us shrank down against the mound of earth. The moonlight had come again, and across the cemetery, half way up the hillside, the dark blobs of men's figures had suddenly appeared. Two men carried something oblong which sagged between them. They had appeared from behind the mausoleum, and were now moving away from us, toward the opposite gate.

I gripped Dr. French. "They're carrying a man!"

We could see it all now: two men in dark clothes carrying the sagging inert form of a third man between them. Could that inert form be—

Anne's horrified whisper echoed my thoughts. "Is that—is that Kent they've got?"

Dr. French swept us both behind him. "You two stay here! Rollins, hold her down behind this mound."

He leaped to his feet. His shout rang over the graveyard. "You—over there; what are you doing?" He was running forward, but he was not so incautious as he seemed, for he came to a tree and darted behind it. "You—drop that!" His shot, high in the air, sounded like the roar of a cannon in the stillness.

The two figures dropped their burden and ran. We could see them reach the other gate and go through it; and a moment later there was the fading sound of an automobile in the distance.

Very tangible ghouls, at any rate!

The doctor was shouting, "Come on!" but we were already half way to him.

"Oh, if only it is Kent!" Anne cried.

THE man lay prone in the graveyard path, face down where they had dropped him. But he was not Kent! We saw it, even before

we got there. This was an older man, a large, heavy-set fellow, with a head of iron-gray hair like a mop. Dr. French turned him over; his dead, pallid face stared up at us.

"Good Lord!"

"What is it, Doctor?"

I stood gripping Anne, and we both gazed down at the doctor who was bending over the corpse.

"Why, I know this fellow," said Dr. French. "He died in the Maple Grove Hospital."

The small hospital of Maple Grove was well known to Dr. French who spent most of his mornings there. This was an Italian importer, named Torelli, who lived in Maple Grove, and had his business in New York. He spoke almost no English; he had been in this country only a few months. Dr. French had been called in consultation over his case. He was suffering from a complication of afflictions: hardened arteries, a high blood pressure and a heart whose muscle was degenerating into fatty tissue. He had contracted a severe bronchial cold, and, in spite of medical efforts, his laboring, suddenly dilating heart had killed him. He had died three days ago and had been buried here in this cemetery a few hours before Kent. His body, now, quite evidently, had been dug up by these ghouls, these robbers of graves, who were making off with it when Dr. French frightened them away.

The doctor told us this with swift, brief words. The look on his face as he gazed up at us in the moonlight carried mingled wonderment and horror.

"Died, Rollins! He died—he died last Tuesday, but he—he's not dead now!"

A LOW groan came from the figure lying in the path. I shoved Anne away and knelt down beside the doctor.

"Not dead? But you say—"

"Hush! He's trying to speak!"

He was not dead, but evidently he was dying. His labored breath seemed to be choking him, but he was trying to speak, and, as we bent lower, we heard his words.

"What—a—damn—fool!"

"English!" gasped the doctor.

"Good God, it's English!"

It came again, in clear English, with no hint of Italian accent.

"What a fool I was!"

Dr. French seized him. "Torelli! What happened to you? Tell us what happened?"

But the dying man did not heed us. He coughed weakly, horribly, and went on, "What a fool! This damned body. It's no good! I say, it's no good!"

He mouthed and choked on the words. All his breath went out with a labored gasp, but he recovered it. He seemed imbued with a last frenzied strength, panting, struggling, twitching at our feet. His groans were ghastly.

"Oh, this damned body! Let me out! Let me out!"

It ended in his throat with a gurgle. A paroxysm swept him; for a moment he writhed, with faint screams, "Let me out! Let me—out!"

Then suddenly he stiffened, lay motionless with sagging jaw, his bulging eyes staring at the stars.

He was dead. Dr. French had seen him die last Tuesday. We saw him die now.

CHAPTER V

Antagonists from the Grave

WE had thought to keep the affair secret, but it was impossible. We took Torelli's body back with us in our car and delivered it to the hospital. Dr. French consulted with his brother physicians. They decided not to bury the body again for a time, but

to keep it under guard, watched constantly day and night.

How impossible to keep such events from becoming known! We had to notify the cemetery officials that we found the grave of Torelli opened and the empty coffin lying nearby. A guard was placed in the cemetery—armed men creeping in there each night after dark, hoping to trap these mysterious ghouls.

And we had to notify the police. It had seemed at first to Dr. French and me, that only Kent was involved in the inexplicable affair. But now it had spread to others. Besides Torelli, there was the case of the young man in the neighboring town. His name was Foley. He still lingered in a coma, his dying condition very much as Kent's had been.

A widespread search was instigated by the police, and suspicious characters were rounded up and questioned. The news of all this spread like fire in prairie grass. Internes whispered to nurses, who went home and whispered to their families. Police guards speculating on why they were guarding the cemetery, tried to piece together what they had been told, and invented more. The men who were questioned by the police, and released, since nothing could be found against them, went back to their friends with wild tales.

Terror lay on Maple Grove and all its neighboring communities within a day. The thing was garbled, and fantastic, gruesome, inexplicable as the events had been, the whispered spreading of them enlarged the horror to proportions diabolical. It was an affair not to be discussed in the daylight; a thing to be whispered on shadowed street corners, or in darkened rooms at home. Theory, conjecture was futile—yet everyone theorized with fancy stimulated into wild flights. Human in-

stinct reaches so easily to embrace the supernatural!

WITHIN a day or so, the public was creating the terror upon which it fed. The police, hospital and cemetery authorities were deluged with reports of supernatural happenings. People heard creaks and raps in the walls of their rooms. The sound of groans woke nervous women up at night; young girls could not sleep for the fancied hearing of prowling footsteps, or the feel of men's eyes peering at them through their windows. Sick people—and more especially those who chanced to have trivial, temporary ailments—went into a panic of hysterical apprehension.

In the midst of it, harassed police officials could find nothing tangible to attack. Habitual offenders of the criminal world were questioned and in ten minutes were obviously as mystified as the men who questioned them. The hills and woods of the neighborhood were searched for Kent, but to no avail.

It was all so intangible. What had happened to me hardly deserved credibility; it could all have been a figment of my fancy. The second death of Torelli, witnessed only by Dr. French, Anne and myself, was scoffed at by the police. Yet two graves in the Maple Grove cemetery had been opened, and two corpses were removed. That was tangible, not to be denied. More than that, it was presently discovered that several of the more pretentious vaults had been rifled of corpses recently interred. Nor had the affair begun with Kent Cavenish, for we learned now that a cemetery twenty miles distant had had several vaults opened the day before Kent was buried.

AND there were other solid facts. An automobile was found abandoned some two miles

down that back road beyond the Maple Grove Cemetery. It had been stolen from a nearby private garage. Quite evidently it was the car in which the two ghouls had escaped when they dropped Torelli's body at Dr. French's shot. Several seemingly authentic reports were made of local burglaries. A private home was entered by night, thieves plundering the kitchen and pantry of its food. Two vacant furnished homes where the families had left for the summer were burglarized. These were in different, nearby towns; neither was in Maple Grove. In both cases, the things stolen were men's clothes and blankets. And then, by night, a small grocery store in an isolated, lonely neighborhood, was broken into and a considerable quantity of food was taken.

Strange facts upon which anyone might build wild theories! I was, during those next few days, several times admitted into the conferences of Dr. French and his fellow scientists. How could science cope with a thing like this! The elderly Dr. Gregg, at this time one of America's greatest alienists, had come from New York. He was a specialist in psychiatry, and all his life he had delved into those mysterious disorders of the human nerves and mind which so closely approach the supernatural that no one can say where medical science ends and occultism begins. Anne and I told Dr. Gregg all we could. He was a very kindly old fellow, his face thin and lined, and crowned by snow-white hair, thick and waving for all his seventy years. His pale-blue, gentle eyes were at once penetrating and questing.

I RECALL a conference in which the local police chief endeavored to reduce all the inexplicable happenings to the criminal formula with which he was familiar: men

robbing graves and homes and grocery stores for gainful purpose—lawbreakers who would soon be arrested, tried and convicted.

"All the rest—this ghost stuff," he said grimly, "is the bunk. Imagination. Hysteria. I don't say that you, Rollins or your sister, are liars. You, Dr. French—I don't doubt your veracity in the least. But I think there has been some error. Nobody can die twice. It's not reasonable."

"I agree with you," admitted Dr. French quietly. "It's not reasonable, but it's true."

"Maybe it is, maybe not. What you gentlemen are doing, I think, is interpreting things wrong. This is a gang of crooks, undoubtedly, up to something—though what, I'm blessed if I can figure out. But we'll round 'em up." He smiled at Dr. Gregg. "I've heard of you a good part of my life, Doctor, and I've got a great respect for you. But I never knew a scientific man would fall for ghost stuff."

WHAT is known as the supernatural," Dr. Gregg said quietly, "may very readily be wholly scientific, once we understand the natural laws governing it. That's what you do not appreciate, Captain Walsh. A great deal of to-day's science would have been supernatural to the people of a hundred years ago. A radio, for instance—" He checked himself, and added, "This is no time for an academic argument. Captain, you are accustomed to making deductions by piecing known facts together. Have you done much of that in this case?"

"Why—"

"Let me summarize facts. Ten graves in this neighborhood have been robbed and the corpses gone. All in the past week. You say a gang of crooks did it. Why would they do it?"

"That," said the Police Chief, "is what I'm damned if I can figure out."

"No known motive, you'd call that, wouldn't you? Very well. Ten corpses have vanished. Now I'll ask you, have any crooks been seen engaged in any of these criminal activities of the past week?"

"Dr. French saw two in—"

"The two who were carrying Torelli's body? He was not near enough to see them, save that they seemed to be human forms—"

"Men who dropped the corpse and ran," Captain Walsh interrupted. "And they had stolen a car. They escaped in it and abandoned it. That seems pretty much like a regular crook to me. What are you getting at, Dr. Gregg?"

"You will understand in a moment. No so-called regular criminal has been identified as connected with this so far. But two of the ten corpses have been seen and identified. Kent Cavendish, after he was buried, was seen, recognized, and talked with. And so was Torelli."

THE alienist drew a slip of paper from his pocket. "Here is a notation of the deaths of those ten men whose bodies vanished from their graves. It shows, let me say, the physical condition of the vital organs of those bodies. All died of illnesses in which one or more of the vital organs were more or less impaired. All except Kent Cavendish. He was, if you can imagine the anomaly, in good physical condition when he died."

The Chief of Police mopped his face. "What are you getting at?"

"Do you follow me? Torelli's body was in bad shape. Two—suppose we call them friends—helped his body out of its grave. It lived for a brief time. It talked, not like Torelli, but like *someone else*, using a totally different language. That

someone else did not like the body. It said so plainly. The body was not in a condition to live. The lungs and the bronchial passages were horribly clogged. The heart was badly dilated. The mechanism worked for a moment, and then stopped again. But Kent Cavendish is different. His body is strong and well; there is nothing to prevent his being perfectly active!"

The little hospital office was silent for a moment. Then Captain Walsh stammered,

"I hear what you say, Dr. Gregg, but—"

"It seems pretty obvious, Captain; it is the only hypothesis into which the facts all fit. The first graves which were opened were vaults, out of which a reanimated corpse might escape of itself. The corpses did escape that way and helped the others out of their graves. Some alien spirit is animating Kent's body. It watched his death, and thus it knew which bedroom was his. It watched his funeral and hovered over his grave, waiting for the other cadavers to open that grave so that it could possess the body of Kent."

"The burglaries, you said, were not skilfully done. Nothing was stolen but clothes for men, and food, blankets and such things. Why? Because these robbers are only trying to maintain their existence, Captain Walsh! Hiding somewhere and needing the necessities of life. Not a band of crooks, Captain. We're not dealing with crooks, but with the corpses themselves!"

CHAPTER VI

The Midnight Visitor

WHATEVER the nature of these mysterious depredations, they seemed now to have ceased momentarily. Three days had passed since Kent's burial; and from that moment when he had

leaped from the kitchen doorway of Mrs. Green's boarding house and disappeared across the garden we had had no sign of his existence, living or dead.

Beyond the possibility of finding Kent, our interest now centered in the young man, Foley, who, in the neighboring village, still lingered at the point of death. He was in a trance-like coma and slowly sinking, but as yet his spirit clung, reluctant to leave.

We were, during those three days, constantly apprehensive of some new, weird happening. And the nights! They were, indeed, nights most horrible for Anne and me. Of all menace, that which we call the supernatural can be most fearsome. I had never thought it before, but I knew it now. It was for Anne I most feared. I could not forget Kent's threats if I told of his midnight visit. I had told, and I felt that by now he must know it. And I recalled with a shudder his strange look, when, in his bedroom, I had mentioned Anne; and how, later, downstairs in the kitchen, he had questioned me about her, and had specifically threatened her.

We were taking precautions. Both Anne and I had changed our bedrooms from the second to the third floor of Mrs. Green's house. Anne stayed secluded, never going outdoors; and after dark each night one of Captain Walsh's men, in plain clothes, arrived at Mrs. Green's and spent the night in the second floor hallway outside the door of the room Anne had previously occupied. All the rooms there were vacant now; most of Mrs. Green's boarders had precipitously fled.

WITH the instincts of a trained detective, Captain Walsh felt that our best chance of capturing Kent was through Anne, by using her as a lure. In this, both

Dr. Gregg and Dr. French concurred. Anne herself was eagerly willing; and though it was against my every instinct, I had no course but to agree.

Every precaution was taken to avoid danger. But in the daytime, and once or twice at night, we showed Anne briefly at the house windows. And we kept a dim light in her room and made moving shadows of her upon the drawn blind, so that if Kent were lurking within sight, he would know she was here. And we left the front door of the house and one of the lower windows generally open.

Would he come? He did not, the first night. Nor the second. The third night, near midnight, Dr. French and I, armed with police automatics, were seated in one of the darkened lower rooms of the house. Anne was in her third floor bedroom; the plain-clothes man was on guard at the head of the stairway on the second floor.

We heard a tread on the steps of the front verandah. Was it Kent, coming at last? The front door was closed, but not locked. From where we sat, we could see that door, with the dim entryway light casting a yellow glow upon it. The footsteps crossed the front porch. But the door did not open. There was a horrible moment of silence when the footsteps ceased. And then the front doorbell rang—a single, brief ring.

We were on our feet. "I'll go," I whispered; and Dr. French nodded and drew back out of sight.

WAS it Kent, coming now openly? My hand went into the side pocket of my jacket and gripped the gun. When I got out in the hall I saw Walsh's man at the head of the stairs; he nodded at me and drew back, watching, alert, weapon in hand.

Again, as that night in the grave-

yard, I had the queer feeling that we were fatuous with these weapons. Perhaps I did not show it, but I think I had never been so frightened as in that moment when I crossed the lower hall, came to the front door and opened it.

It was not Kent! A man stood on the shadowed verandah; a smallish fellow in dark clothes and a gray felt hat with its brim pulled down half across his white face. As I appeared in the opening doorway, he seized the hat and removed it.

"Is this Mrs. Green's house?"

His voice was low, smooth and refined.

"Yes," I said. "What do you want?"

"I would like to see Mr. Rollins. Jack Rollins."

"I am Jack Rollins."

I was sure I had never seen this young fellow before. He took a step toward me.

"May I come in? Look here, I want to talk to you." He seemed afraid that I would bar him. He added, with lowered, furtive voice, "It's about this Kent Cavendish affair. I think I can give you some information. I didn't want to give it to the police."

My heart was pounding in my throat so that it seemed to smother me. The visitor's gaze was past my shoulder, searching the hall behind me. I stepped aside.

"Come in."

"Thank you."

He entered and I closed the door.

"Come with me."

I LED him to the darkened room off the hall where Dr. French was waiting. Walsh's man was not visible at the top of the stairs.

"Oh, Dr. French—a visitor for us."

The fellow started, as a light flashed on in the room we were approaching, disclosing the doctor at its threshold.

I repeated, as casually as I could, "A visitor. This is Dr. French, Mr. —"

"My name is George Francis Bacon."

The name burst impulsively from him. I got the impression that he was alarmed at having given it.

"This is Dr. French," I said. "Come in and sit down, please."

He hesitated; took a backward step. Then, perhaps because he realized his name meant nothing to us, he entered the room and sat down a little awkwardly on a chair, with the doctor and me facing him. There was a brief pause, during which Dr. French eyed our visitor and then turned inquiringly to me.

I said, "I've never met you before, Mr. Bacon?"

"No. But I've heard of you, Jack Rollins. I can't—I'm afraid I can't speak plainly. Look here, you'll just have to trust me."

He sat with his hat in hand, fronting us. He had sleek, jet black, oily looking hair, and dark, luminous eyes. The room-light, though fairly dim, nevertheless struck him full, leaving the doctor and me partly in shadow.

"What is it you have to say?" I demanded.

A GAIN he hesitated. He shifted uneasily in his chair, and his gaze instead of being on me, was roving the room.

"I'm not sure—" He stopped, vaguely, and began again. "I'm not sure I have anything—"

"You mentioned Kent Cavendish, Mr. Bacon."

I flung Dr. French a significant glance as I said it; but he was regarding our visitor intently.

"Yes—Kent Cavendish. A friend of mine in England some years ago. I am from London, Mr. Rollins."

He did indeed talk with an unmistakable British accent.

"Yes?" I said. "Well, this is—this was Kent's physician."

"What do you know of Kent Cavendish?" Dr. French demanded abruptly.

The young fellow started. His face, here in the light showed extraordinarily pale and thin. There were beads of sweat on it. He was hitching his chair, and suddenly I realized that he was trying to avoid the light.

"I—why—why, I have heard—" He seemed to force his gaze to meet the doctor's. "I have heard very strange things. I don't believe them, of course, no one believes them. I met—met Kent—"

He stopped and went into a sudden fit of coughing, which seemed to leave him exhausted.

"You're ill, aren't you?" said Dr. French.

"Yes, I—I'm not very well." Our visitor's breathing seemed labored, and he spoke faintly.

"And about Cavendish," the doctor pursued. "You were saying—"

"I met Kent in New York about a week before he—he died. He told me there was a girl. A girl he loved. Anne Rollins."

I tensed. And I felt the doctor's gaze which seemed warning me not to speak.

"Anne Rollins?" Dr. French prompted.

"Yes. He told me about her. She—is she here—here now?"

"Yes," said the doctor. "She is here. What about her?"

"Here? In her room upstairs? But you have her guarded, haven't you?"

He was facing the hall door; his wandering gaze seemed searching. I realized with a shock that he was giving us no information. The reverse—he was questioning us!

"Guarded?" said Dr. French, with simulated surprise. "Guarded? Oh, no! Why should she be guarded? Is there danger?"

INSTEAD of answering, the fellow again was seized with a fit of coughing. The sweat stood in great beads on his pallid forehead. And as I gazed at him I was abruptly aware of an indefinable quality of strangeness in his aspect. His clothes, of good cut and texture, did not seem to fit him. They were too large, as though perhaps a severe illness had recently made him much thinner than when he last wore them. He held his feet partly back under his chair. But I saw that the shoes he wore were not mates—one was tan and one black. More than that, there was about him something nameless: an indefinable aspect of unreality. Something frightening to contemplate; so frightening that though the thought leaped at me, I shudderingly thrust it away.

His coughing this time seemed nearly to strangle him, but he recovered himself and stood waveringly on his feet. He was horribly thin and wasted; ravaged by illness.

"I'll go now," he gasped. "I—thank you."

We stood up with him. My hand was already in the side pocket of my jacket, gripping the automatic. I had no idea but that Dr. French would detain this fellow. But the doctor flung me a warning glance.

"Good night, Mr. Bacon."

I stood reluctantly aside. This visitor had told us nothing; had given not the least excuse for coming here. Had asked us if Anne were here—if Anne were guarded! And now, without questioning him at all, Dr. French was letting him go!

"Jack, I'll show Mr. Bacon out."

I STOOD watching them cross the lower hall. It may have been a trick of my imagination, and no doubt it was. Dr. French was smoking one of his habitual cigarettes. The rising smoke hung above

him as he paused at the hall door. For an instant there was a spiral of smoke. I seemed to see that it had a form—a form melting, half materializing. A presence, hovering over the doctor and the departing visitor? Was is that, mingled with the smoke? Or was it just the smoke, and my own fevered imagination?

The opening front door swirled the smoke away in a draft of incoming air. I breathed again. What nonsense that I had thought I saw anything else!

"Good night, Mr. Bacon."

"Good night, Doctor."

The front door closed. Our visitor was gone. His step on the porch sounded hurried, as though he had crossed at a run.

The doctor came back to me. "Well, Rollins, what did you make of it?"

Had I seen something in the smoke? I saw nothing now. But I sensed something—a presence here with us in the room. Something hovering here. Something not to be seen, nor felt. But it impressed in some indefinite way, my senses.

I could see that it had affected Dr. French. His jaw dropped. For a brief instant we stared at each other, stricken. Something was here with us. Something tortured, harassed, wanting to impress itself upon us? Wanting to communicate? Strangely, I was not frightened. It seemed that I, too, was trying to communicate: striving to listen, not with my ears, but with my inner consciousness to what *something* wanted me to know. *Something* friendly, so that I was not frightened, but eager.

THE feeling was abruptly gone, as though a spell had broken. Failure! And simultaneously Dr. French felt the same. We had for that instant been standing transfixed.

He stirred with a jerk. "Good Lord, what was that?"

"You felt it too? But, Doctor—"

"Gone now."

"Yes—gone." And then I added, "Dr. French, that visitor—don't let him go! Don't! There's still time. Shall I chase after him?"

I would have started rushing toward the door. A frenzied eagerness was on me, and a horrible fear that the visitor would escape us.

"Let me go, Doctor!" The doctor was gripping me. "Let me go!"

Had I caught this frenzied fear from that indefinable communicating presence? I suddenly seemed to think so.

"Let me go, Doctor!"

"No! Rollins, sit down! You're excited. You don't understand!"

He forced me to a chair. He stood before me. "That young fellow—what did he call himself—George Bacon? He came here to find out if Anne was here—and if we have her guarded. Don't you understand?"

I had never heard Dr. French so vehement. "He came, undoubtedly, from Kent Cavendish. He was sent here by Kent. Don't you understand? We're trying to lure Kent here and seize him. We're using Anne as a lure. So why should we trap this messenger? Let him go back to Kent, and say that the girl is here, and not guarded. Perhaps Kent will come next. That's what we want most, isn't it?"

"But—" I stammered, "but who—"

"George Bacon? I don't know. Do you? Did Kent ever speak of him—a friend back in England?"

"No. I don't think so."

The doctor eyed me. "George Bacon was not the name of any one of the ten corpses which have vanished; our antagonists—call them that, Rollins. No one of them was named Bacon. But the body of this visitor is described on my list!

Didn't you think he looked like a slim young Spaniard, with that pale face, dark eyes and sleek black hair? He was a Spaniard, Juan Fernando, his name. If he had lived he would have been in very much the physical condition of our visitor. But—"

My head was whirling with it. This thing was too strange!

"But he did not live, Rollins! He died—a week ago. And the night Kent's body vanished, so did his—until now!"

THERE was a sound in the hall behind us. Anne was out there, with Walsh's man who had followed her down. She came, white-faced and trembling.

"Jack! Dr. French! You had a visitor? Not—not Kent?"

"No," said the doctor. "Not Kent. Nothing important. You—"

"I could not sleep." She had on my voluminous dressing gown which hung to her slippered bare feet. The black braids of her hair lay over her shoulders. "I could not sleep, and when I heard the door-bell I came down and joined McGuire, but he would not let me see who it was with you. And then—just a moment ago, Doctor, I had the strangest feeling. As though Kent were here with me!"

Kent! That was it! I knew it now! The presence of Kent had been here, harassed, troubled because we let this visitor escape!

"The old, dear Kent," Anne was saying. "It seemed as though he wanted to tell me something."

Dr. French seized her by the shoulders. "We felt it, too!" he cried. "It was Kent. The personality of Kent—his spirit, call it what you will! All of him, except his body. He wanted us to capture this visitor? I didn't know it then, but I know it now!"

Anne stared, trembling. "That was it! That was it!"

"Anne, listen to me." The doctor still held her. "Think carefully. Did you ever hear the name—did Kent ever mention the name George Francis Bacon?"

"Why, of course!" she cried. "Kent knew him back in England years ago. They were schoolboys together."

"What did he look like, did Kent ever say?"

"Why, yes. A big blond fellow who was always taller than Kent. They had a fight in school. George Bacon was Kent's worst boyhood enemy. He stole money and blamed it on Kent."

"And what became of him? Think carefully. Did Kent ever say?"

I held my breath.

"Why—why, yes," Anne stammered. "Years ago, when they were both still in school, George Bacon was killed in a motor accident near London!"

CHAPTER VII

The Return of Kent Cavendish

EVENTFUL night! If only we had realized what dire things were impending; what events were whirling us on. There was no time for us to try and fathom what had just occurred. We stood gaping at Anne, Dr. French gripping her shoulders; and I sat beside them, with Walsh's man, McGuire, at the threshold. Suddenly the hall telephone, whose bell we had muffled, rang softly.

McGuire came back from answering it.

"Dr. Gregg. He's at Summit Hill. Something about that young feller, Foley. He died a while ago."

Foley dead! The young man, ten miles from here, who had been lingering in a coma like Kent's.

Dr. French went to the telephone. We gathered around him; in the silence we could hear the tiny voice of Dr. Gregg.

"You, French?"

"Yes."

"Foley died this evening. We've been watching the body. Dead as a herring, no question of that. I mean, it was dead, French! Rigor mortis setting in normally. But there's something going on here now, French! I thought you'd come over."

"Something—"

"Don't argue, man, come! My nerves are ragged, I tell you. I'm in no mood to stand here and talk. Will you come?"

"Yes, of course I—"

"Come and bring that young woman, Anne Rollins. We need her—and her brother; but the girl especially. There's something damned queer about this, French." The old alienist's voice was both vehement and trembling. "Something too queer for me. You bring the girl at once, will you?"

"Yes, of—of course," stammered the doctor.

"In your car?"

"Yes."

"Then we'll expect you in twenty minutes. Hurry, French. It may occur again at any time, and we need the girl."

Strange, wild words from the lips of a famous scientist! We heard the click as he disconnected.

Dr. French turned to Anne and me. "He said—he said—"

"We heard it," Anne interrupted. "He wants me. Something I can do to help."

VERY strangely, of the three of us, Anne was the most calm. Something she could do to help. It seemed to inspire her; to calm her, give her a fortitude certainly abnormal to her or any other girl in such circumstances. I recall that I was stricken with amazement, as I had been on that night we went to the churchyard to examine Kent's grave. Anne, by nature, had always

been self-reliant, free from hysteria. But even so, it seemed now as though her love for Kent brought only calmness where even Dr. French was visibly shaken.

"I heard him," she repeated. "There must be something I can do. Jack, don't look at me like that! Of course I'm going."

With every instinct to spare her fresh horrors, I think I would have refused, but she and Dr. French both overrode me, and I yielded. If only we could have looked ahead an hour or two! I must have had a premonition, for I recall that as we took Dr. French's car and he drove us swiftly for Summit Hill, a weight lay on me—a presage of evil beyond anything I had ever felt since the sinister affair began.

Anne had taken only a few moments to dress. We left McGuire on guard in Mrs. Green's and in fifteen minutes we were speeding into the dark outskirts of Summit Hill. The hospital stood near the edge of the village—a long, low, rambling building of two stories. It was about one in the morning when we got there. We found Dr. Gregg, with two of the hospital physicians in an operating room on the ground floor.

"Come in, French." He nodded to Anne and me. "Miss Blake!" A nurse appeared from a shadowed corner of the room. She was a capable looking, middle-aged woman, and her face was nearly as white as her stiffly starched, linen uniform. "Miss Blake, you sit here with Miss Rollins. Two women together—better so. I don't want to terrify this plucky little girl unduly."

He spoke in a swift hurried undertone, and, after introducing us to the two local physicians, he waved us to seats.

"I'll explain presently, Dr. French. Sit quiet, all of you. Close that door again, will you, Dr. May?" His manner was businesslike.

IT was a small, white room, gruesome with its apparatus—and the corpse of Foley which lay prone on its back on a low wheeled table. The body was garbed in pajamas, with a sheet half covering it; the pallid face, with opened eyes and sagging jaw had an operating light full upon it from overhead. The light was shaded, so that the body and the small wheeled stretcher lay full within its circle, but all the rest of the room was in shadow.

My gaze had seen the outer door through which we had entered and which had just been closed by Dr. May; and the two windows with drawn blinds. There was one other door, partly opened into a smaller adjoining room. Miss Blake had been in there with another nurse when Dr. Gregg called her to come and sit with Anne, and the other nurse was still there. I was with the four physicians, seated near a corner of the room, and, a little apart from us, Miss Blake sat with her arm comfortably around the tense, white-faced Anne.

The body lay near the center of the room, within a few feet of us all. My gaze clung to it. Foley had been a young fellow in his middle twenties—a tall, lanky Irish-American lad, with an uptilted nose and a shock of unruly red hair. His body was not wasted; he seemed lying here asleep, save for the bloodless face, the staring blue eyes and that horrible sagging jaw.

Dr. Gregg was saying in a hushed undertone, "He died about nine o'clock to-night. We've been watching the body like this ever since—Dr. May, for God's sake, fix that jaw."

The younger physician rose again and with the heel of his hand pushed closed the sagging lower jaw, holding it a moment until it stayed closed.

Dr. Gregg nodded. "Thanks.

Gives me the creeps, that damned thing."

THERE was another silence as Dr. May resumed his seat. Was this what we had been sent for, to sit and watch a corpse? What had been going on here? Something mysterious, quite evidently, for all the physicians were obviously tense and nervous. Why did they want Anne? Why had they sent for her to attend so gruesome a conference?

Again Dr. Gregg's hushed undertone broke the silence. "We think it will happen again—what's happened twice already. Rather than tell you, we'll wait. You'll have an open mind to form your own conclusions. That, by heavens, is what I want: some light on this if you've got any to give us. Miss Anne, are you too frightened?"

"N-no," she said haltingly.

"Don't be. Keep your wits. I will tell you this: Something was going on here in this room an hour ago. It may begin again any minute. Within this room—or within that body. Something; some struggle. We all felt it. You, Miss Anne, perhaps you, more than any of us, will be aware of it and understand it. Will you try?"

"Yes. Yes, I will try." She huddled against the buxom nurse.

Once more the heavy silence gathered upon us. I sat hunched on my small white iron chair, staring at Foley's body. How much time passed I do not know. Ten minutes at least. A tense silence was upon us all; the operating light glared down on the corpse, and the room shadows seemed to creep closer upon us.

TEN minutes. It may have been more. I was suddenly aware of a change in the room. There was nothing visible; nothing audible; no difference perceptible to any of my human senses. Yet I was aware of

the difference. There had been a tense, but quiet, silence here. The corpse had been dead, quiescent. But the room now, I suddenly felt, was filled with an unseen, inaudible turmoil. A strife was here. I felt it first with a vague uneasiness: a disturbance pressing upon me so that all my nerves were tingling with a presage of evil. My skin moistened all over me with the coming of a cold sweat.

Even the corpse was different! It was motionless as before, yet different in some indefinable way. It seemed not quiescent now. Quivering, perhaps? Abruptly I realized that it was quivering, a tiny tremor was running over it so that I saw the hanging folds of the sheet—magnifying the motion—quite visibly trembling!

I stirred suddenly in my chair. Several of the other men shifted their feet. Anne gave a low cry, which was quickly suppressed by a warning whisper from the nurse.

Dr. Gregg's low voice sounded. "It's beginning again. Watch closely! Miss Blake, you take the girl forward if it tries to speak!"

Anne! What were they going to try to do with Anne? I was swept by anger at these cold scientists who would sacrifice anything to gain knowledge!

I was on my feet. "Dr. Gregg—"

"Be quiet, you fool!"

And Dr. French was pulling at me.

I stammered, "But I won't let you—"

"Be quiet," Dr. Gregg repeated vehemently. "Your sister won't be harmed."

Ah, if only I had had the wit to be more persistent! But I relaxed in my chair, still gripped by Dr. French.

A STRUGGLE was going on here! A soundless struggle! It seemed as though things impon-

derable were surging about the shadowed room. The body presently was quivering from one end of it to the other. And then twitching. It was a soundless struggle: we could see and hear and feel nothing save the *effect* of it.

Then I knew that the struggle was no longer about the room, but wholly within the corpse. A concentration of turmoil. A concentrated strife. The corpse twitched more forcibly. A knee came jerking up and went down again. The sheet slipped off sideways and fell to the floor with a faint swish. The visible white movement of it as it fell and the audible swish shocked my senses, as though, striving to see the invisible and to hear the inaudible this shock of reality was too great to bear.

The corpse of Foley was not dead! It had been dead—three doctors testified to that—but it was dead no longer. Was this Foley, coming to life before my eyes?

No! A reanimation. Movement, physical life was coming to this body which had been Foley! But the animating force was something—someone different. I did not know it then, but I was made aware of it in a moment. The jaw sagged open, then closed with a click. The eyes rolled. A tinge of color was in the livid cheeks.

Again Dr. Gregg's half whispered voice sounded.

"One of them has possession. Which one?"

Two identities—two spirits, call them what you will, were struggling here for possession of this empty shell. A battleground—this white body.

"It's going to speak!" came Dr. Gregg's swift undertone. "Miss Blake—"

THE rolling eyes halted. There was light in them now! I could not mistake it. Something was in

possession now, gazing out at us through these windows which had belonged to Foley. I shrank shudderingly back as the tortured, confused, questing gaze seemed to rest upon me. And the lips were quivering, moving, trying to form words with a breath that was too faint.

The questing gaze passed on. It came to Anne, and halted again. At this point the lips parted.

In the tense strained silence of the room, a low moan came from those blue-white parted lips. The chest heaved with a struggle for more air.

There was another moan, and then very faint words.

"Anne. Why—Anne—you—"

It had spoken to Anne! It recognized her!

The nurse was on her feet holding, lifting Anne up. I was conscious of Dr. French's warning grasp upon my arm.

The faint words came again: "You—why, Anne—Come, let me tell—"

Dr. Gregg whispered, "Quickly, Miss Blake. It called for Anne an hour ago. Quickly now."

Anne with Heaven knows what inspired fortitude, pushed the nurse away and advanced to the body.

"I'm here. This is Anne. Who—who are you?"

One of the hands tried to come up to touch her, but did not have the strength.

"Anne, dear. Anne, dear, this is—"

She bent a little lower. Inspired by love, she even touched the shock of red hair which had belonged to Foley.

"Are you—Kent?" she murmured. "Tell me, dear—are you Kent?"

KENT! Kent Cavendish? Not the body of Kent, which was abroad, an antagonist who had threatened me and Anne! No, it was not that. This then must be the

real Kent. Bodyless, hovering over us back there at Mrs. Green's; hovering here a moment ago and struggling with something—someone else—for this vacant shell. Was it that?

Anne was murmuring, "Are you Kent?"

"Yes! Kent! I want to—want to tell you something, Anne. This—thing diabolical—"

The faint words died away. Then began again. "Anne, bend closer. I can't talk so loud. I'm—going. This other one is too strong for me. Oh-h!"

It ended with a groan of anguish, and then came the words, "Closer, Anne."

She bent lower. I could see the moving lips against her ear, telling her something. And then I heard the anguished words, "Anne, good-bye dear—"

It seemed that the body of Foley seized Anne. A caress? An anguished embrace? I shook off Dr. French's grip—or he released me. We were all on our feet. But at once, Anne was safely loose. The arms fell away from her; and a convulsion jerked at the limbs. Then the body stiffened, and was once more a corpse.

I heard myself shouting, "Anne, come away! Anne!"

Miss Blake, the nurse, was with me as I leaped forward. Anne was standing erect, but she was wavering. Her knees gave way, and she sank into an inert heap at our feet.

CHAPTER VIII

The Trapped Ego

IT'S not serious." Dr. French looked up at us as we crowded around him where he knelt over Anne's fallen body. "She's only fainted. Coming around all right. Move back."

Heaven knows, she had the provocation to faint. I lifted her up and

carried her, at Dr. Gregg's command, into the adjoining room, at the door of which the other nurse met us. There was a couch in there; I laid Anne gently on it. Dr. Gregg was roaring demands to the nurses for restoratives. But they were unnecessary. Anne was already reviving. She waved Miss Blake away.

"I'm—all right, thank you. All right now."

I sat for a moment beside her. Dr. French leaned down at my shoulder, and whispered, "I wouldn't question her now. Presently."

"Yes." I nodded.

She had closed her eyes; she was relaxed and exhausted. Miss Blake stood bathing her forehead.

"Jack, dear, I'm all right."

I stooped and kissed her. "Yes, Anne. Of course you are."

"He said—did you know that it was Kent who spoke to me? He said—"

"Not just now, Anne. Wait a few moments until you're stronger."

She sighed and closed her eyes again.

Dr. French motioned me away, and sat beside Anne. She opened her eyes and smiled. "I'm all right, Doctor," she said, "Don't be worried. I—I'm just tired."

"I think we should let her rest," Dr. French said softly. "Miss Blake, you and Miss Cory sit with her."

At the door to the operating room one of the other physicians called softly.

"Dr. French, come!"

Dr. French drew me with him. We left Anne lying resting, recovering, with the two nurses close beside her. Oh, if we had but known!

"Dr. French, come quickly!"

WE got back into the operating room, and I saw that Dr. Gregg and the other two physicians were watching the body of Foley which was again twitching!

We stood now, close around it, with the light beating down on us all.

Dr. Gregg swung on us. "Close that door! The girl has had enough of this."

I closed the connecting door upon Anne and the two nurses, and turned back to the operating table where I stood, like the physicians, peering, watching, tense, trying to fathom the eery, invisible drama taking place within the body which had been Foley. The twitching of the muscles had abruptly stopped. The long, lanky frame, clad in the blue-white cotton pajamas, lay quiescent. The eyes now were closed; the jaw was tightly closed, but the lips were slightly parted. It was, indeed, a grim face. The skin, once waxen with the pallor of death, was faintly flushed. The blue-white lips, as I stared, were visibly reddening. Then I saw that the chest was stirring with a gentle, rhythmic respiration!

This was no turmoil now; no strife. The body of Foley might have been grimly asleep, and visibly gaining strength. This was a complete reanimation. Was it still the identity of Kent, habiting this body now? I prayed so. But a premonition told me no, for Kent, so briefly here using these lips, this tongue and vocal chords as a means of communicating with us, had been tortured, struggling. I recalled the parting words: "This other one is too strong for me."

And quiescence was here now. A resting, after the strife.

Dr. Gregg was murmuring: "This seems permanent. Almost like normal strength. Let the strength come fully. Then we'll wake him up."

Dr. French had his stethoscope in hand. "Try it," Dr. Gregg added. "There will be a normal beat, presently, I'll wager. Look at those lips, and the color in the ears. Feel the pulse. This time we'll have someone trapped! There'll be no

escape when full possession is taken. And it's being taken, gentlemen!"

A TELEPHONE buzzer sounded softly from an instrument in the room corner. A microscopic voice of the hospital operator outside, said, "Can Dr. Gregg take a call? It seems important. It's from Police Captain Walsh."

In the silence of the room we could all hear the voice of Captain Walsh as Dr. Gregg talked with him.

"Dr. Gregg, this is Walsh. I thought you'd want to know at once. We got one of 'em! We did—an hour ago. One of my men shot him. Shot it, and killed it."

"Shot what?" Dr. Gregg demanded.

"One of the corpses. One of the men. Hell, I don't know what to call it. One of them on the list; the ones who died and were dug up and vanished. This was that young Spaniard—Juan Fernando."

My heart leaped into my throat. Our midnight visitor! Not much more than an hour ago the reanimated body of Juan Fernando which called itself George Francis Bacon had called upon us.

Captain Walsh's voice was saying: "My man O'Flaherty spotted the fellow slinking along the road not far from Mrs. Green's boarding house. O'Flaherty bumped right into him and recognized him at once. Fernando—the corpse, whatever you call it—grabbed him like a maniac. Hell! O'Flaherty shot it. Brought the Spaniard down, dead as any corpse ever was. What'll we do with the body, Dr. Gregg? I've got it here."

"Keep it there. We'll come and see it later to-night, Captain."

"O.K. I'll keep watch of it. If it stays dead—Lord, it ought to; O'Flaherty's bullet went through the brain.

They presently disconnected. Dr. Gregg turned back to us.

"You heard? Got one of them. But the body's ruined—permanently dead, undoubtedly."

An hour ago that body had contained an identity—something calling itself George Francis Bacon. And that ego was released—an hour ago. Dr. French hurriedly whispered to the physicians.

THE corpse of Foley before us still lay quiescent under the light. But life was within it; there was no doubt of that. The heart and respiration were fairly normal now. Color was in the cheeks and lips. It seemed resting, gathering its strength.

Time passed; five or ten minutes. We had taken our seats again. The physicians occasionally were whispering together. The eyes of the body were still normally closed. Abruptly I seemed to see that the lids were not wholly down, but partially raised, and, as I watched, I saw them tremble slightly. It seemed as though this person lying here were not asleep, but wide awake; simulating sleep, but nevertheless fully conscious, watching us furtively through narrowed slits beneath its apparently closed eyes!

Was it Kent? I knew it was not. Kent would not lie furtively, rescent like this. It was an enemy then, watching us, gauging us, planning what to do.

I murmured, "Dr. Gregg!"

But the old physician had seen what I had seen. And he too had a feeling that it was not Kent.

He sprang to his feet. "Hah! Not asleep! You think you can fool us, but we've got you now!"

The pajama-clad body, this unknown person, started involuntarily at the words, and the eyes opened. He knew he was discovered. His eyes stayed open, defiantly staring at us as we crowded forward. He

was a stranger here, staring at us. But he did not move, save that his dangling arm, the pulse of which Dr. French had felt a few moments ago, came up with a swift movement and rested at his side.

"Speak!" rasped Dr. Gregg. "We've got you! A strong healthy body you secured this time, didn't you? A body worth striving for. Well, you've got it."

THERE was no answer; just that stare of defiance; and the parted lips, through which his breath was now coming visibly faster, drew into the suggestion of a sneer.

Dr. May exclaimed, "We've got him, whoever he is! Not Cavendish, obviously. We've got him, and he can't withdraw. Not when he's established like this."

"Speak!" rasped Dr. Gregg again. "You won't? You're a fool! We've got you in there and you're going to speak! You're going to tell us all about this diabolical thing. You understand? Tell us! Answer our questions!"

There was still no answer, and the defiant eyes roved over us. Then they roved the room. He knew he was trapped, and all his muscles were tense now. His gaze seemed gauging the doors and windows as though he hoped by a sudden spring to elude us and escape.

Both Dr. French and I were still armed. Dr. French held his automatic in hand. I drew mine out, too. Our prisoner suddenly sat up with a jerk, propped on one elbow. Our muzzles were leveled at him. He eyed them sardonically, and suddenly he spoke.

"But, I say, you're not taking any chances, are you?"

It was the physical voice of Foley, which I had never heard. But the intonation, the slant of the phraseology, the accent, the tempo, were British. All those blended

nuances which go to make up a vocal personality—all of them were familiar! George Francis Bacon! I could not miss it.

I burst out, "I know him! Dr. French, it's George Bacon! Our visitor—"

An hour ago, in the body of the frail, sickly Spaniard—released from that by a policeman's shot—he was now appearing here.

Dr. French echoed me, "That's who it is! This time you're going to answer our questions!"

"Am I?"

"By God, you are!" Dr. Gregg roared.

OUR captive was still upon his elbow, tensed, eyeing us closely. "Clever, absolutely clever, aren't you?" He was ironic. "I think I shall go to sleep. To-morrow, maybe, if you treat me kindly, I will feel more like talking."

We were pressing close upon him, but Dr. Gregg waved us back, all save young Dr. May.

"You stay close, May. We'll make him talk."

Dr. May took my weapon, and stood with it leveled.

"Now then," said Gregg, "are you George Bacon? You who originally were killed in a motor accident in London some years ago?"

No answer. Nothing but that defiant leer.

"Well, we'll start making you talk," Dr. Gregg declared grimly. "A little physical pain. May! Give him a prod in the ribs for a starter. He's in good shape to feel physical pain."

He winced as the muzzle jabbed him.

"Again, May! Will you talk now?"

"No!"

"Harder, May!"

"I won't talk, I tell you! I talked too much before. I was a fool! The damned body of that Spaniard—it

was no good. Too sick! It wouldn't let me think clearly. I told too much, but I'm all right now. You can't make me talk! I won't tell you anything more."

"Oh, you won't? We'll see about that!"

A sudden memory struck me; a realization. This was our third encounter with George Bacon! I gripped Dr. French, where we were standing near the wall of the room.

"Doctor, remember Torelli—the body of Torelli, lying of pneumonia as we bent over him in the Maple Grove Cemetery? Think back. Remember how his voice sounded? There was something about it like this fellow's."

"You're right," whispered Dr. French. "I believe you're right! That was this same George Bacon!"

"Again, May! Break his ribs if you have to!"

IT came with a horrible startling suddenness upon us all. I saw Dr. May leaning down menacingly, and jabbing with his automatic into the prisoner's ribs. Dr. Gregg was a step behind them. I saw that there was a sudden scuffle. The writhing, protesting body had raised a hand and seized Dr. May's hand where it gripped the weapon which was pressed tightly into the prisoner's side.

The thing, coming all in an instant, could hardly have been avoided. It was a surprise—so unnatural an attack. All Dr. May's instinct, when he felt the hand gripping his, was to hold the weapon against his antagonist's ribs.

We heard Dr. May cry out, "No you don't! I've got you!"

Too swift, too brief a scuffle for any of us to move.

The prisoner shouted, "Trapped me? Fools! You think I can't escape you?"

The automatic roared with a report deafening in the narrow con-

finer of the room. Dr. May jerked back, horrified with the realization that the fingers gripping his had pulled the trigger. The shot tore upward through the chest. The body fell back, and lay motionless on the table slab. In the pajama-clad side a great hole was burned in the fabric, with torn flesh under it. From a horrible jagged bullet hole, blood was welling out. The bullet, tearing upward and across, had pierced the heart.

The body was dead. The captive had escaped us.

And upon the heels of this horror came one infinitely greater! For several minutes we had been in noisy commotion here in the operating room. But we were stricken now into a horrified silence. And in that momentary lull a groan sounded. Not here, but muffled, through the connecting closed door to the adjoining room.

Anne was in there, with the two nurses! In the tenseness of the past ten minutes, none of us had thought of Anne.

A cry burst from me. "What's that?"

A low, horrible groan of agony. A woman! Anne? Dear God!

I was the first to reach that door. Flinging it open, I rushed in—and stopped, frozen with horror.

Upon the floor Miss Blake lay dying, her white uniform ripped and stabbed and crimson with blood. Beside her was the body of the other, younger nurse, her white face staring at me; there was a slash across the throat, half severing the head so that it seemed to dangle grotesquely. . . .

And Anne was gone!

CHAPTER IX

From Across the Void

THE hour that followed this horrible discovery was to me the most torturing interval of my life.

The body of Foley which had so engaged our attention was inert beyond any possibility of reanimation, and no one in the hospital gave it another glance or thought. Miss Cory, the younger nurse, was dead, her throat horribly slashed by the knife of a fiendish murderer. Miss Blake was dead, having died within a minute after we reached her. But she had, at death, a moment of consciousness and gasped out to us that a man had been hiding in the room. He had attacked the nurses, seized Anne, knocked her unconscious with a blow of his fist and disappeared with her through the window.

Anne had seemed to recognize him! She had gasped, "Kent! You, Kent!" just as he struck her.

Miss Blake told us that with her dying words. So Kent Cavendish was this fiendish murderer? No, not Kent—his body merely. The man whom I had encountered packing Kent's clothes that night in Kent's bedroom; and whom I had fed in Mrs. Green's kitchen. And who had threatened my life, and threatened Anne! The man who talked with English phrases a hundred years out of date!

My imagination flung to encompass it all. This man—this Ego—with his antiquated English had perhaps lived in the American Revolutionary War period. He had died and become a wanderer—a lost soul, submerged in the suspended torture his misdeeds on earth had brought upon him. And now he had come back, and had stolen this body of Kent Cavendish.

Was it a form of reincarnation? Was it something abnormal, unusual, yet consistent with laws of nature which we do not understand and thus must term supernatural? Are all supernatural, occult events, wholly scientific save that we do not understand the laws of science governing them?

WHAT, indeed, may be the vast drama of life after death? These strange events in which now I was plunged, were they not merely the externals of a drama invisible to my living consciousness, a drama infinitely greater? Half a dozen Egos, or ten, at the most—usurping wanderers from the void—had suddenly found some power to seize these dead bodies and reanimate them. What abnormality of natural laws was it? Had it ever occurred before? Would it ever occur again? Where would all this lead to?

Wild, invisible drama, of which these dire events within my ken were merely the outward manifestation! Most of the victims had died natural deaths here on earth within the past week—Torelli and Juan Fernando, for instance. The invading Egos had seized these shells, reanimated them for a time, and found, in the case of Torelli, that the deceased body was worse than useless, impossible to maintain alive.

But Kent Cavendish and young Foley had not died natural deaths. Had they been killed? Had these usurping Egos found a way of striking at Kent and Foley, forcing them to yield up their human houses—their bodies—strong and free from disease? It seemed so.

Eery, invisible drama. The Ego of Foley, weak perhaps, and unable to fight, was whirled away and lost. But the Ego of Kent was putting up a fight. Dispossessed, confused, tortured—nevertheless, all that was the real Kent Cavendish was here now, somewhere, fighting, struggling to get back into his own body, perhaps? But the villain who had that body—this fiend who had just stabbed the two nurses and stolen Anne—was evidently too powerful. Or, perhaps, he was too firmly entrenched within the healthy human shell which had belonged to Kent.

BUT the Ego of George Bacon was more of a weakling. He was less fiendish and more cowardly. I could envisage in this unseen drama that Bacon, in the whirling void of Nothingness—perhaps the half way place between Life and the Eternal Hereafter—had planned all this. Perhaps he had gathered about him this little band of insurgent restless Egos.

Bacon, remembering his enemy, Kent, had seized upon him. And then the stronger villain had ousted Bacon and possessed Kent's body for himself. And the weakling, George Bacon, had tried the pneumonia-ridden shell of Torélli. He had held it for a little time, but lost it when its mechanism, too shattered by disease, had again failed.

Then Bacon had taken the body of Juan Fernando, another frail, disease-torn house! A bullet from a policeman had ended that tenancy! Then Bacon had come to the body of Foley. But here, the Ego of Kent had disputed the occupation, and Kent, for a moment, had won the struggle. He had found a human voice to use to tell Anne what had happened.

Then Bacon had flung him away. And we had let Bacon establish himself firmly in Foley's body. The physicians would have tortured him with physical pain to make him tell us where these reanimated corpses were hiding. But Bacon had escaped the trap by committing suicide. . . .

"Rollins! What's the matter with you?"

I lifted my head at Dr. French's question, jerked out of this wild fantasy of whirling thoughts.

"Nothing," I stammered. "I'm all right, Doctor. Just the shock of it—Anne gone. No news yet?"

"No. But there will be. He must have been carrying her. Couldn't get far. All Walsh's men are out. We'll have a report any minute."

"But just to sit here—"

"I know. All your instinct, mine too, is to rush around. We did that—half an hour ago."

WE were still in the Summit Hill Hospital. It was quieting now after the first wild turmoil. We had searched every corner of it, and the grounds. Dr. French and I then had taken his car and sped over all the quiet neighborhood. But to no purpose. And we had telephoned everywhere we could think to call. Walsh's man, McGuire, was still at Mrs. Green's. All was quiet there. We had telephoned to neighboring towns. Traffic men at the main road intersections were warned. Every nearby town sent out a squad on motorcycles.

There seemed nothing we could do but sit in the hospital and wait. It was now nearly three A.M. of a fairly clear, windless, moonlit night, with a haze in the air making a dankness and thin fog which lay in stratas where the land was low. The Summit Hill hospital, misnamed, was in a hollow, at the edge of the village. Open country lay near it, woods and fields and broken hilly uplands were no more than a mile away. So many places where on a night like this a murderer with his captive could hide!

Walsh had arrived and made the usual police investigation. Whatever the unseen, supernatural events, once these invading Egos took human bodies, they were subject to human laws. That, at least, we knew; and their actions of necessity were of the sort with which Walsh and his men could cope. The man who was using the body of Kent had evidently come here, perhaps early in the evening to watch the death and reanimation of Foley. He had stolen into that room adjoining the operating room, and had hid there. He had escaped by the window with Anne, a drop

of only a few feet to the ground. Kent's body was large and extremely powerful; Anne was small and slight, and easily carried. Or perhaps there had been a car, with another of these fiends, lurking nearby.

SOMEWHERE, within a few miles of here, we all believed, this horrible band of semi-humans must be lurking. Living bodies, diseased or healthy, must be fed, clothed and housed. The burglaries had been raids to secure food and clothing and the little necessary equipment to maintain human life.

But where were the gruesome outlaws hiding? The country had been ransacked, yet even over these few square miles of lowlands, villages, and wooded mountains, it was obvious there must be many places as yet unfound. To this lair Anne would be taken. That, too, seemed reasonable. Doubtless she was there already, and the thought turned me cold with terror. A little band, perhaps only six or eight now, of things in human form, bodies, most of them upon the verge of death by natural disease; diseased brains, with fiendish thoughts animating them. And Anne among them. . . .

Most horrible fancies swept me so that I huddled against Dr. French as we sat alone and silently waited in this little hospital room. Human bodies have human instincts. Diseased minds run wild to fiendish deeds, swept by the worst of human passions out of control. I recalled how the eyes of Kent with the light of the leering villain from a hundred years ago had gazed at me in Mrs. Green's kitchen as he mentioned Anne. . . .

These were facts not quite to be denied. And with them, inextricably mingled, was the drama of the unseen. Kent, the real Kent, had been around me all this night, and was

cognizant of all these terrors. He had tried to warn me against letting our midnight visitor go. He had gained the body of Foley and told Anne something of all this. Perhaps he had even told her where our horrible antagonists were hiding? That knowledge was lost to us now, for Anne, too, was gone. But the Ego of Kent perhaps knew where!

I tensed at the thought. Kent knew where Anne was now! I gripped the thought. I murmured in my heart, "Oh, Kent! Tell me! Guide me!"

WHO can fathom the mysteries of the Unknown? Was it desperation of the struggling Ego of Kent? Or my own despairing struggle? Or both. Or the bond between us, our friendship; our love for Anne—the bond now so intensified in our despair that we could bridge the gap between the living and the dead?

It must have been all these things—or none. But whatever the reason, I felt now with startling clearness the effect of the unfathomable cause. A strange, unnamable feeling gripped me; a sudden wild hope; a sudden psychic knowledge that Kent was here with me. A feeling that he knew where Anne was and wanted to tell me.

"Rollins! Good God, don't look like that! What's the matter with you?"

I must have been staring as though at a vision.

"Dr. French!" I hung to his arm. "Of all the world, if the spirit of Kent is here, he can best communicate with me. And he's trying! I know it! I can feel it!"

"Rollins!"

"I can, Doctor!"

"Does he know where Anne is? Can you—"

"That's it! That's what I feel. Almost the knowledge. I'm at the

brink, the knowledge is here, just beyond me."

I was reaching with extended arms, as though here before me were something which I could physically grasp.

"Try, Rollins! Close your eyes. Think hard. Oh, Kent Cavendish, if you can only give us this knowledge!"

Dr. French had his arm about my shoulders. He, too, was staring; his murmured voice was intense, pleading.

"Oh, Kent Cavendish, give us this knowledge! To your friend here, fight to give it. Make him understand."

Science was pleading into the void of the Unknown. And I added my own plea, "Oh, Kent, try hard!"

ALL this was so intangible! Ignorant people, striving for the Unknown by instinct rather than reason, must perforce endow the intangible spirit across the void with a human shape, to personify it and try to make it real. And so they think they see a ghost, a wraith, a spectral shape. And hear a hollow sepulchral voice talking words they can understand.

Imagination! The simplification of the unnamable! The spirit of Kent which I felt now was no wraith to be seen however vaguely. My imagination, back in Mrs. Green's lower hall as our weird visitor was leaving, had pictured a visible wraith of Kent. Imagination! Fevered fancy! I knew that had been merely the smoke hanging above Dr. French's head.

But this now was a feeling within me, vague, indescribable, yet shining clear as the stirring of one's own spirit. . . . I stood upon the brink of knowledge. Baffled, like Tantalus, reaching, almost attaining—yet baffled. One may try and recall the details of a faded dream with quite a similar feeling.

"Dr. French, I—I—"

Almost! But not quite! I could sense the struggling Kent beyond the brink. I thought he had given me the knowledge! I thought I had it.

"Dr. French, I—"

But there were no words to fit the fading thoughts. Even the thoughts dimmed and blurred and were gone.

"Oh, Kent—" I murmured it aloud. "Oh Kent, we must do better than this!"

And it seemed then that he must have flung me something so that it held an instant in my mind and I could gasp it out.

"River Road!"

"Rollins! What's that?"

"River Road, doctor! Why, you know the River Road!"

IT was no more than a vague consciousness that the River Road was important for me to ponder. As one often says of an inexplicable enlightenment, it "just popped into my head." There was nothing but those two words, "River Road," yet a surge of triumph swept me.

I jumped to my feet. The impression was strong that Kent had receded and was urging me away. Then he seemed coming back, disappointed that I was still here; then receding again, urging me away.

"Dr. French, it concerns the River Road!" We both knew the road, which branched from the highway a few miles from here and wound up into the mountains following the course of a little river. "It concerns the River Road, Doctor! I know it now. Your car is outside."

He caught me by the shoulders. "Just what do you mean? Shall we tell Dr. Gregg, and see if—"

"No! No!"

I could feel the urge of haste. And it seemed as though I was alone in the night, speeding closer to the scene of where Anne must

be. I felt that more detailed knowledge would come to me.

"No!" I gasped. "You drive me, Doctor! Get me there. I'll know what to do—where to go when we get on the River Road. I feel it. If you should want help, we can find a house up that way and telephone back. Oh, please, please drive me and let me relax to think it out. Kent will be with us; he's trying now to make us hurry!"

It chanced that there was no one in the cross hall of the hospital which led to the side entrance where Dr. French's car was parked. Within a minute we were in the car and away, Dr. French driving over the empty, moonlit road with furious speed. His automatic was in his lap; mine was in my hand. I slumped in the low seat, staring at our headlights as their beams swayed over the ribbon of road which reeled beneath us.

And it seemed that in the moonlight, overhead, the spirit of Kent was riding the night, urging us on.

CHAPTER X

A Wisp of Fog

WAIT, Doctor! Just where are we? Halfway up?"

I felt that we should stop, and go no further. I had a sudden apprehension that we might go too far.

"The road to the mill is right ahead." Dr. French had slowed up. With abrupt decision, I snapped off the headlights, and we came, in a moment, to a silent stop.

"Halfway up, you say, Doctor?"

I no more than whispered it; and he whispered back, "About that. The road to the mill is a hundred feet ahead."

The mill! It set my heart wildly pounding. It seemed significant. I had not thought of the mill, but now it seemed most important of all the places in the world.

The River Road was no more

than six or eight miles long. It left the valley highway and followed the winding course of the little torrent; it rose perhaps a thousand feet, topped the mountain ridge, and descended on the other side. It was no more than a small, winding road, most of it set upon the side of the hundred-foot gorge through which the little river tumbled in its downward course. A western setting in miniature, curiously wild and out of place here in the east, so near the small suburban towns.

It seemed especially desolate and remote this night. We had not passed a car. The moonlight shone on the silent wooded hillsides. The river tumbled with a white splashing murmur at the bottom of its little ravine. There was a white mist down there hanging in stratas.

THE road at the point where we stopped, had left the gorge momentarily and was a hundred yards or so away from its upper rim. A broken, unimproved road, dangerous for automobiles, turned to the left just ahead of us, descending steeply into a break in the ravine down to where there was a small river dam and the decrepit ruins of an old mill half hidden in the woods. It was a picturesque landmark here; well known, and on Sunday afternoons much photographed by passing motorists.

Why did the mill seem so important to me now? I sat tense, gripping Dr. French.

"The mill, Doctor! That's it!"

"You mean—Anne is there?"

"Something about the mill. I don't know what I mean. It's the mill, there's only the mill in my mind, nothing else."

We climbed noiselessly from the car. The road, the steeply sloping hillside and the declivity leading down to the river were all deeply wooded, heavy with black shadows

brightened by occasional patches of moonlight. In the silence we stood peering, listening to the distant splash of the water where it went over the broken spillway of the dam.

I whispered tensely, "It may be they are in the mill. That's all I can think of."

Had Anne been brought here by her captor? Was the gruesome band using this as their hiding place? I murmured, "Kent, can't you tell me? Give me some idea!"

Perhaps he did tell me. Who can say?

"Dr. French, let's creep down there. Perhaps, if they are there, we'll see a light."

"But this place was searched a week ago by Walsh."

"If they were not here then, could they not have selected this since? Doctor, come."

WE were both gripping our weapons. For a moment Dr. French hesitated. He whispered, "That house down at the foot of the hill, hardly a mile from here—I was thinking if we telephoned we could have half a dozen men here on motorcycles in—"

"No! Too long to wait!"

"I think so. I just don't like to rush into anything without considering." He gripped me, whispering with his mouth near my ear. "We'll have a look at the mill. But above everything, there must be no alarm. They would kill Anne if we openly attack."

"That's why we don't want men on motorcycles."

"Exactly. I realize it."

But was anything—anyone—here? We could only hope that we might be able to determine that, and still not be discovered. If Anne were here, surrounded by these ghoulish things in human form, the least attack from us would cause them to kill her at once. Unless she

chanced to be a little apart from them. . . .

I whispered it.

"Exactly," the doctor agreed. "They may not be armed with more than knives. If we could determine that, Rollins—" His swift whisper was vehement. "If the worst comes, shoot swiftly. Shoot them as you would rats! It's our best chance, and there may be only a few of them."

I started forward, but again he checked me.

"Wait! Something I want to get out of the car."

I saw him fumbling in his little medicine case and then stuff something in his pocket. He caught up with me.

"Do you know this place?"

"Yes. I've been here two or three times." I had been inside the old mill within a year.

"We shouldn't go down the road. Lead us through the woods. Take it slowly, Rollins. No noise! And keep out of this accursed moonlight."

WE went up nearly to the intersection of the little branch road; then I turned us off and we went down into the woods. It was a steep, broken descent, and the climb down was slow. The splash of the river grew louder. I blessed the sound which might cover any noise we might make. The trees were heavy with late spring foliage, and the underbrush was thick.

"Easy, Rollins! Not so fast! I can't go so fast without noise."

It took us a full ten minutes. I could feel the growing dampness of the mist which lay in the hollow.

I presently stopped. The river gorge had a broken side here. We were almost down at the river level, below the dam. Through the underbrush and trees, the mill showed fifty feet before us. It was a low,

oblong, stone building, tumbled apart by the ravages of time. Half of one side had fallen and the roof was wholly gone. The window openings, what was left of them, showed as black squares. From the angle where we stood, the little dam was visible, with the water spilling over its broken top where part of the framework still stood holding the decrepit wheel. Trees hung close over these falling ruins, and the crumbling fallen blocks of stone were half covered by an encroaching tangle of underbrush.

We stood gazing. By day it was a peaceful, picturesque vista, a memory of bygone times. But now, half swallowed in darkling shadows and brightened by moonlight patches an aura of evil seemed hanging upon it. There was an almost motionless layer of fog hanging down here like a suspended veil; and as we watched, a faint breath of wind stirred it so that it waved and swirled.

Silent, eery ruins. Was anyone here? No lights showed, we heard no sound save the splash of the river.

Dr. French whispered, "No one is there. Or at least, not with any light. We'll see—"

I THOUGHT suddenly of the space under the mill. It had been a sort of cellar. Above it, with the roof gone, the place was open disclosing a litter of broken stones and rotting machinery of the mill partly covered by vines and a tangle of underbrush. But underneath, at the level of the bottom of the dam, I recalled that there was a lower space, still almost intact. Facing this way there was only the moldering blank base of the building's side walls.

"Doctor, the lower room! That's where they must be!"

It seemed that I knew they were here. I recalled a broken trap-door

in the center of the upper portion, which led down underneath. But that was no good. We would be discovered. And I recalled that at the base of the dam there was a little door which also gave access to the dungeon-like cellar.

I whispered, "We can cross here to the edge of the river, and then reach the bottom of the dam on this side. There's a lower entrance. I can find it. We won't be seen."

"Try it, Rollins," said Dr. French.

Another ten minutes went by. We reached the river edge and came up along it. The fog lay dank and thick upon us with the moonlight shining overhead and the nearby mill showing like a spectre through the veil. We came to the lower mill corner, pushing through the underbrush which grew close against it. The blank lower wall was green with mossy mold. As we reached the base of the dam, the falling water was almost a roar.

It was dark and dank here; green slippery rocks were underfoot. I made out the small door-entrance. It was a nearly square opening, some four feet high. The heavy, square-beamed wooden casement was worm-eaten and partially gone. The door had long since vanished, but the two huge iron hinges still were here, bent and dangling. The opening was littered and choked with a tangle of vines.

WE came cautiously up to it. The vines hid the interior. We listened, but there was no sound save the falling water behind us.

Dr. French drew me against him. We were both standing, our guns in hand.

I murmured, "There's a short lower passageway, but we can't see in from here."

"We'll have to go in?"

"Yes."

We cautiously shoved the vines

aside. We crept in, almost abreast of each other. Was anything here? But now I knew there was. The little tunnel was black, dank and fetid with the smell of fog and wet earth. But I knew that something living was in here.

The fog seemed to follow in after us. Perhaps it was merely the breath of wind we stirred as we moved forward.

Was someone here? I saw the faintest glimmer of what might be a light; a glow. Then the tunnel turned an angle. The dank and moldy grotto under the mill opened before us.

There were lights, three or four guttering candles, flickering with the stirring air so that monstrous misshapen shadows swayed on the littered stone floor and up the slimy walls. Across from us—it was not more than fifty feet—the opposite wall was broken near the top with a rift which admitted a faint moonlight shaft, adding its light to the candles.

We stood hardly breathing, staring at the scene. In the candlelight I saw a little huddled group of human figures—eight in all. Three were eating; crouching like animals, silently eating and pulling at each other in dispute over the food. Two others were huddled in blankets. One lay apparently dead. The moonlight struck the face, showed an expression of death—agonized frozen there.

BUT Anne? I had not seen her at first. There was a shadow, but one of the figures moved and let the candlelight past, and then I saw her. She was seated on a blanket; seated tense with white terrified face and staring eyes. And beside her, partly beyond her, was the seated body of Kent Cavendish! But not Kent now. This was a murderous Ego which had lived a hundred years ago! He had a knife

in his hand, the knife, doubtless, with which he had murdered the two nurses. He was wiping it on his shirt; he showed it to Anne and laughed.

Gruesome little band of outlaws huddled here underground. All of them were corpses; mere shells of humans, reanimated now by these usurping unnamable things from the void of the Unknown. Gruesome in thought, worse than gruesome in actuality. The disease of which these bodies had so recently died was stamped plainly upon them now. All of them were tortured, harassed by physical distress and pain. All would die very soon undoubtedly; this human existence which they had usurped was worse than useless to them. And there was one body which had been dead too long before the reanimation took place. The tissue decay had set in. I saw it huddled, with the candlelight full on its face. A face with the nose missing . . . leprous.

All of them, worse than dead. . . . But the villain who had Kent's body was in no distress. He reached over, put an arm around Anne's shoulders and laughed again.

WE were within twenty feet of the nearest of the figures. We had not been discovered. The sound of the water was muffled in here, but it was enough to overwhelm any noise we had made. And we were beyond the candlelight.

I put my mouth near Dr. French's ear. "We can shoot them all—all but the body of Kent. It is too close to Anne. We've got to wait."

I could feel him nod. There was nothing we could do. A step or two further and we would raise the alarm. A volley from our automatics would kill all those huddled things. But Kent's body was partly behind Anne. We could not chance it. A slash of that murderous knife would kill her.

But if we waited? This thing was holding Anne against it in the hollow of its arm. The face which had been Kent's was bending down whispering to her.

I murmured, with a voiceless murmur, "Oh, Kent, if the spirit of you is here, tell me what to do!"

Was Kent's spirit here? It seemed as though it must be here. I murmured, "What should we do, Kent? Oh, can't you do something?"

Wild plea! The void is so great! . . . Yet, how great, how uncrossable is that void?

Dr. French and I, standing frozen in the darkness, helpless to move save possibly to retreat, were suddenly aware of a faint current of air from behind us. A draft was coming in the little tunnel, drifting the width of this dungeon room and passing out through the rift in the opposite wall. And we saw over our heads that the fog was floating in from the river. A wisp of it went swirling out into the candlelight.

WAS it my wild fancy? The vapor, yellowed by the candlelight, seemed coiling upon itself in mid-air. My fancy? But Dr. French saw the same, for he clutched at me and I could feel his gesture. A yellow-white swirl of fog, rolled almost into a spectral shape.

The miserable little group of semi-humans all saw it, and, as though stricken, they were all staring. Did they perhaps see more than we could see? Did that wisp of fog mean more to them than it did to us? One of them suddenly screamed, "I'm afraid! I'm afraid!"

It was a horrible, mousing voice. And then they were all screaming it. "I'm afraid! I'm afraid!"

The body of Kent Cavendish dropped Anne and leaped up. "You fools! Be quiet!" It moved a step away from her toward the center of the room. The wisp of fog was

hanging some ten feet from the floor.

My heart leaped with the realization that I could shoot now.

"Doctor—"

He whispered swiftly, "Just a chance. If he—it—comes closer, we'll try to capture, not to kill. A chance—Gregg told me. If we can get the body of Kent Cavendish—try not to harm it irreparably!"

We would have opened fire then, I think, but again we were stricken. The spectral shape of the fog did not drift on, but had turned and was coming toward us.

"I'm afraid." The chorus of gruesome cries had not stopped.

"You fools!"

The body of Kent flailed an arm to dispel the swirl of fog. But he could not reach it.

And the white shape floated toward us, with the body of Kent following it, trying to reach it.

Had the draft of air changed to turn the pallid layer of fog back? Or was this a visible wraith of the spirit of Kent, luring Kent's body near me so that I could attack?

How uncrossable is the void between the living and the dead?

I murmured, "You handle the others," and in a moment I leaped. The body of Kent had approached within ten feet of me, and now I struck it, and we went down together, rolling on the ground. I was aware of Dr. French coming to help me, and then that the corpses were rushing him. And in a moment, yellow spurts of flame darted over me from his automatic. A swift volley, a few horrible screams, then silence.

I was rolled momentarily on top of my antagonist. I saw the fallen figures; and I saw Anne backed alone against the wall with her hands pressed against her livid face. What supernormal strength was it that could let her hold her senses amid such horror!

THE body of Kent was on top of me in an instant. I had swung the automatic, but it was knocked away. The knife came at me with a slash; I caught the wrist, but could not hold it. The body of Kent was so strong! I recalled, as the knife came down, how Kent had always been able to defeat me at rough and tumble wrestling.

I turned the knife from my chest, but it went into my shoulder like a stab of white heat. I felt it twisting, coming out again. . . . And I was aware of Dr. French bending over us. He gripped the body of Kent and held something against the face. I smelled the sickening smell of chloroform; and I felt the body go limp in my grasp. It sank back unconscious, ripping the knife from me as it fell.

A white-hot pain in my shoulder encompassed all the world. . . . And after an interval I was aware of Dr. French and Anne leaning over me.

I could hear his voice! "You saved Kent's body for us! We've got it, unharmed. By God, that took courage."

And Anne's voice: "Oh, Jack dear—"

I could feel, after another interval, Dr. French trying to stem the blood flowing from my shoulder.

"Not so serious, lad. You'll be all right, but it hurts like hell, doesn't it?"

And I sank again into a void where there was nothing but that white-hot pain. . . .

CHAPTER XI

The Great Mystery

I HAVE little more to recount. One may guess, and let his fancy run.

But there are a few more facts. I was not seriously hurt. I was at the Maple Grove Hospital when the unconscious, still drugged body of

Kent was laid out for the examination of the physicians. It was unharmed, living with that Ego of the murderer within it.

Then after a few hours they moved the body to Kent's bedroom in Mrs. Green's—familiar surroundings for the bodiless spirit of Kent. Perhaps the spirit was with us again. Who can say? And if it were, it wanted these familiar surroundings, this familiar environment to help it in the coming struggle.

Would science restore Kent? Perhaps; perhaps not. And old Dr. Gregg, most eminent alienist of his time said fervently, "I can only try."

The drugs he injected into the blood stream of the body were neither mysterious nor unusual. The heart was depressed, slowed and almost stilled. The respiration became so faint it could hardly be detected. The face was white and placid, as though the sleep of death were here. The body was in a state of suspended animation, almost death. This usurping Ego was driven by science into almost a forced vacating of this house.

Dr. Gregg and an assistant sat on each side of the bed, one with a stethoscope, the other with fingers on the pulse. A third physician had other hypodermics ready.

BY the head of the recumbent body Anne and I sat together. Dr. Gregg had wanted us. He told us to sit here and plead with our hearts and minds, plead to the spirit of Kent to come back and take his human shell from this invader. Dr. Gregg presently would completely stop the heart. Death? Call it that. There would be a moment when the house would be vacant and the invader driven out. There would be a struggle. Kent could struggle then for possession of his own, aided by science. There would be a quick stimulant for the

heart, a shock which might reanimate it—might make all the complicated human mechanisms resume their functions which only for a brief moment had been checked.

And then some Ego would be here. The murderous villain, or Kent? No one could say. But Dr. Gregg wanted Anne and me, whom Kent loved most deeply, to be here and plead, to add the force of our wills to help his fight.

Was that science?

I gazed at the calm bloodless face. I saw the surgeon make the injection into the arm vein.

Horrible, tense moment. Dr. Gregg was bending tensely down with his stethoscope. Dead! Death was here. This human machine was stilled. What a great mystery is death!

"Quickly, Dr. May!"

The strong healthy heart of this body responded. Perhaps, without the impulse from within of an arriving tenant, it would not have responded. No one will ever know. But it started again; and with it, all its allied intricate machinery. Life! What a great mystery is life!

Had there been a struggle in that moment when the house was vacant? The calm, white exterior gave no evidence of what desperate encounter may have taken place within.

ANOTHER long interval, with the physicians using all their skill to help. Then Dr. Gregg sighed. "That is all we can do. We can give him consciousness in an hour. Then we will know."

An hour? It seemed an eternity. But the drugs gradually wore off. The engine throbbed more strongly. Whoever was here had a firm tenancy now.

The body moved! Other endless minutes. . . . Dr. Gregg said gently, "Anne, you sit by him. I want him to see you."

"Yes. Yes, Doctor."

Love can give a woman very strange fortitude!

And at last the eyes opened, roved vacantly; and then, with the light of reason in them, fastened upon Anne.

And the lips moved. "Anne—"

Was it Kent?

Anne bent lower. "Kent, dear." "Anne."

The hands came weakly up, fumbled at her shoulders; then the fingers brushed her face, touched her hair, caressingly.

"Anne—dear—"

"Oh, Kent, it's you!"

"Anne, have I—have I been very sick? I'm better now. I feel better."

Kent! It was Kent, here again with us.

"I'm better, Anne. Don't cry. I'm going to get well."

His arms drew her protectingly down as she burst into wild sobs and clung to him.

WITHIN a day Kent was well upon the road to normal recovery. What had he to tell of all this? Ah, but the void is uncrossable! There was nothing in his memory. One may not go beyond this life and bring back knowledge. I cannot say why that should be forbidden, but it is. Only one thing was in Kent's consciousness: that moment when in the body of Foley he had a brief human existence. Vaguely, there was a blurred memory of that.

The strange incidents were over. Whatever caused them, who can say? The invading band of Egos—if that is what they were—had had their trial and failed; and could not, or did not dare try again. Was it an abnormality, scientific enough, if only we could fathom the natural laws which were at work? Dr. Gregg thinks so.

There are so many things we can never understand until we die.



I could see two bits of flame which peered at me.

The Place of the Pythons

By Arthur J. Burks

AND you shall go down into the Place of the Pythons for your sins!"

Her long hair, which once had been as black as the wings of a crow, back in the days when she had been one of the most beautiful women of the Tagalogs, now hung in ragged wisps

about her face. The face itself was wrinkled and ugly, with two bright old eyes, like baleful coals of fire, shining upon me. She shook a bony

finger in my face as she repeated the words, and her gums worked rapidly, as though

"And the sound from the depth of me was a sullen, angry hiss!"

she chewed something exceedingly bitter. Perhaps she did, for one had

but to examine the depths of her wrinkles to feel that she had known much of bitterness.

I did not know her name. Not that it mattered. But she ran the little *tindahan* in the only clearing along the coast which was my stamping grounds. As such, there were many things she could do for me, who had neither money nor home—nor self-respect. I admit freely that I often imposed upon her kindness by one shameless subterfuge or another. The world had treated me badly, and owed me a living for all it had made me endure—and I felt, somehow, that the old hag should compensate me for my sufferings.

"And you shall go down into the Place of the Pythons for your sins!"

What the devil did she mean? I didn't care greatly, for I had already downed the drink she had given me. Because I had refused to pay for it, either with money or labor, she had lost her temper, never difficult for her, and these words had been the beginning of a tirade. I only laughed at her—and her sharp old eyes bored into mine. In spite of my bravado, which wasn't always assumed to cover a lack of courage, I could not face those eyes. Looking away, my gaze fell upon a group of natives. They had been jabbering away all the time; but I hadn't noticed them. I was accustomed to natives and held them in contempt. I took their continual, infernal jabbering as a matter of course, because there was no escape from it anywhere in the Philippines.

IT was their sudden, total cessation of jabbering that caught my attention and held it. That and something more. Most natives—though many pretend otherwise—understand English and speak it atrociously, and all of the noisy

group had heard the words of the keeper of the *tindahan*:

"And you shall go down into the Place of the Pythons for your sins!"

There was horror and superstitious fear in the eyes of every one of the natives as they looked at me. Their thick lips were gaping open, wonderingly—as though they knew themselves to be gazing at someone soon to die! Why did that thought come to me, I wonder? But come it did, as naturally as breathing. As I watched, the natives made their excuses, one to another, and slipped silently out of the little store, with glances back at me over their shoulders.

Slowly I turned back to face the woman whose words had so changed the atmosphere of the place. She was looking at me, I say, yet she seemed not to see me! She looked through me, though I was still there, as though I hadn't been, as though the seat in which I sat had been vacant. I laughed in her wrinkled face, and she did not notice; she seemed not to have heard.

What did she mean by the place of the pythons, into which I must go for my sins? She had said it so straightly, so emphatically, that I knew she believed her own words. It was as though what she had said had really happened, and that I had, with the hearing of those words, already gone into the place of the pythons.

Who am I?

A beachcomber, and there is many another like me in these islands. I am just like the rest, neither better nor worse, and there have been native women. . . .

ISAT quietly and leered at the old hag because her tirade had not shamed me into paying for my drinks—nor for other drinks and food which she had given me from

time to time. Oh, she always believed my promises—or did she? Who knows? She gave me food and drink often, and I laughed at her for a fool. The tropics do strange things to white men. . . .

Ignore me, would she, the wispy-haired old hag? But I would see. I would force her to observe me.

I stepped directly past her and took a dusty bottle from a shelf, a bottle of rarest wine, untouched these many years because no white men had come with tastes refined enough to appreciate it. No native understood its value, and looked at it askance as something alien, something made to tickle the palates of foreigners who never came. I took the bottle from the shelf, expecting that the old hag's tirade would begin again. But still she paid me no heed, looked not once toward me, and, in spite of my bravado, I found myself *slinking* toward the door, as though I had been the lowest of sneak thieves.

I slipped from the tindahan and looked furtively all about me. But there was no one in the clearing. Straight ahead of me the Bay of Subic stretched away to the base of the towering Selangens, whose five peaks pierced a settling blanket of snow-white clouds. When the five peaks are covered with clouds, says an old Tagalog legend, there will be rain, and folks should flee to safety before the typhoons come. Back of me the apparently impenetrable jungle crawled upward, ever upward, toward other white clouds which covered the crest of Zambales. The sun had gone down in a blaze of glory behind it, a couple of hours ago.

Impenetrable jungle; but I knew that in it here and there, with doors barred against the mystery of the night, natives hid shivering from the darkness. But I was not afraid, I told myself, and all the curses of all the withered hags

in Luzon could not frighten me.

I CLUTCHED the bottle tightly under my arm, bowed my head, and made for the edge of the jungle. A mile from the clearing on the beach, deep in the heart of the jungle, was a deserted negrito village whence the black folk had fled. They had heard whispers that the constabulary was coming, and I had taken possession of the house of the chief. Many times, during months past, had I wended my way from the clearing to the gap in the woods where the trail began, thence along the trail to the darkened, silent village. I knew every crook of the way by heart and could have followed it blindfolded. There was but one trail, and no one could have left it because the jungle, on either hand, was impenetrable.

From behind the five-crested Selangens, there came a rolling rumble of thunder. I stopped and looked back. The five peaks were no longer visible and were completely shrouded by clouds of black. I remembered the old Tagalog legend, turned and hurried faster up the trail.

The first pattering drops of rain fell among the leaves about me, and the air grew suddenly cooler. It had been ten minutes, at a guess, since I had left the tindahan of the hag with the wispy hair. It never required more than twenty minutes, even when I staggered with drink, for me to reach the deserted village which I had taken for my own—and now I was cold sober. I strode ahead, and, after a prolonged roar of thunder, I heard the bombardment of advancing rain as it pelted the surface of Subic Bay. And darkness that was deeper than the night itself fell all about me.

I stopped and looked upward. The tips of the trees on either hand had begun to bend and sway, as

though harried this way and that by invisible fingers. I had but a few minutes, for the roar of the deluge grew louder swiftly, and I knew that every tree in the jungle, within a minute or two, would be bending almost double in the gale. Clutching my bottle more tightly, knowing that I could not lose my way, I ran ahead along the trail.

AND then I halted and stood stock still! I had come to the end of the trail. Here the village should be; but there was no village! There was no clearing, even, for the jungle came together about me everywhere. The tops of the trees bent and bowed; the raindrops pattered in the leaves like hail in a growing storm. And then I saw it, though I did not remember that the trail curved just here.

"Strange," I muttered. "That last drink must have been stronger than I thought."

The way lay sharp and plain before me, and the going was easier.

I did not, however, realize why it was easier, until a quarter hour had passed. Then I discovered that the way was easier because it led along a sharp decline—and I knew quite well, that from the tindahan to the village, it was uphill all the way! Wildly I looked about me. It was now too late to escape the storm. The rain, as though my strange discovery had been a signal, came down in torrents. The wind went shouting and screaming through the jungle, bending the largest of the trees until bark and bole cried out in protest. I tried to look back to Subic Bay; but in that direction, if I looked aright, there was nothing but darkness and a wall of blinding rain. I gazed off to my right, and there the jungle lay, white-shrouded with the rain. And whether it traveled upward from me, or down, I could not say.

In an instant it came to me that I was lost. I turned to retrace my steps, bowing my head to the storm, and found that the jungle barred my way inexorably. I swung to the left, felt of the jungle wall with my hands; but in that direction there was no way out. There was a way, but that I knew was wrong, because it led downward.

Well, I would follow on, for where there are trails there are people, and a haven of a sort. My clothing clung to my body like the grip of clammy hands—clammy hands that were strangely warm for all their clamminess. I set my feet on the trail I knew was wrong and moved ahead.

I MOVED ahead into the heart of all desolation! The trees themselves became, moment by moment, more gaunt and spectral, as though some ghastly blight had robbed them of the most decorative of their leaves. The bark of them was torn in many places, and the spots thus exposed were silvery like leprosy. At intervals the veil of the rain would shift as I walked, and in the rifts I could see gaunt crags of dripping stone, black shadows at their bases—until the veil dropped down again, mantling the countryside in dread and mystery. There were holes in the trail, now, and some of them were deep, so that I stumbled perpetually, fighting my way.

I knew that I was bleeding from many falls upon the hard points, for I could taste my own blood on my lips which I had bitten through. I moved ahead and my foot stepped into space, and I fell again, upon my face. Slowly, a strange fear came upon me as I lay there, and, gaining my feet again, I paused for breathing space. The whole world seemed full of awful silence.

The rain-veil shifted once more,

to give me another glimpse of the desolation—of trees that bent in utter silence before the fury of the storm; of snowy bits of fog which drifted in and out among the spectral trees. And, in that moment, one lone tree, straight and tall, stood out from all the others. It, like the others, had denuded limbs that made one think of many arms. I stared at this tree in wild amazement, watching the waving of its arms. And all the arms—save one!—waved in unison with one another, inspired by the weight of the storm. But that one arm—

It did not wave in unison with the others. It waved, yes, but waved alone. When the other limbs bent downward this one flashed upward! When the other limbs bent gradually from the mother tree, forming arches from butt to tip, this one limb formed a wavering *series* of such arches, like a massive streamer snapping in the wind, and its tip whipped right and left with savage violence. The tips of the other limbs were smaller, more slender, than any other portion of the limb in question; but the tip of *this* limb was tuberous, mallet-headed.

AND from heels to head my body grew cold with fear, for memory was flooding back. There are many things of which the Tagalogs know, unknown to white men, for the Tagalogs are old, their memories are old, going back to many rites no alien has ever heard about.

But the rift filled up with rain and drifting fog, and the spectral tree was swept away.

But for just a moment, ere the rift closed, I saw—or was it fancy, born of the storm and desolation?—two balls of greenish flame, set close together. They moved up and down with the rising and falling of the storm, like eyes of night which strive to peer through—eyes that looked straight at me.

I screamed aloud, and my words were whipped away by the storm. Forgetful of pitfalls in my path, this unknown path, I dashed ahead. I stumbled, fell, staggered erect, and knew that precious time had been lost—time that I sorely needed. For behind me there was someone, or something, that pursued. How I knew I cannot tell you; but I knew. There is no explanation for my sudden knowledge, except perhaps in words of Tagalog derivation—words such as might be used by hags with wispy hair, who eke out meager living by keeping silent watch over precious stores in jungle *tindahan*. I can only say that I knew, and that I hurried on; and that with each new fall upon the trail I realized the thing which followed me was drawing closer.

DOWN and ever down dropped the way before me; rougher and rougher grew the trail. There were holes in it at every step, as though it had been traversed by a ponderous giant who had sunk into the ground with every forward movement. I could tell by the lessening of the force of the storm that I was dropping swiftly into some valley, though the trees still kept up their ceaseless bowing and bending, and the pounding of the rain on the ground, the rocks, and the trees, was like the drumming of eternal rifle fire.

I stumbled and fell as the way grew more difficult and ever as I fell it became increasingly heart-breaking to rise again. I was numb from injury, bleeding with wounds my falls had given me, and I had forgotten the bottle I had taken from the keeper of the *tindahan*. Icy cold possessed me, cold that was the coldness of fear. For I knew that whatever was behind me had gained appreciably upon me each and every time I fell. And so, I fell again.

This time, however, I fell much farther, and the breath of my body went from me in a rush. I strove to gain my feet, but could not; and so I went forward, draggingly, upon hands and knees. There were now more frequent rifts in the clouds, more frequent glimpses of the desolation all around.

Fearful as I was of the unseen thing which followed, I paused to peer through one of these rifts, at one of the spectral trees—and the tree which caught my gaze was the strangest of any I yet had seen. *All* the limbs were like the *one* limb of that other tree! Its limbs were not like arms, but streamers, whipping and snapping this way and that; and from the tip of each there glowed two balls of greenish flame, set close together, reminding me of the deep sunken eyes of the keeper of the tindahan.

MOTHER of Heaven! As I watched that tree and the streamers which waved and snapped, there was one which the wind broke loose. I saw it drop soggily to the ground, and as it touched I noted an odd and terrifying circumstance. It did not fall asprawl, as would a lifeless streamer, but in a heap that was conical and rounded, like circles, each one slightly less in diameter than the one below, so that each succeeding circle rested just atop the one below! And out of the center of the coils there lifted, weaving to and fro, a mallet-headed *thing* in which there glowed two lambent dots of greenish flame! And then the rain came down again, and there was drifting fog—fog which came in out of the darkness—and blotted out the sight.

Moaning in my throat, which was tight with terror unbelievable, I struggled on, nor was I conscious for many minutes that I left the place on hands and knees. But then

I could not rise and, after a long time, because the rocks cut into knees and palms, I found it easier, and rather natural, to *creep* along the trail, upon my stomach. The thickness of my clothing saved my tender flesh from laceration.

It is strange that I did not remember the words of the keeper of the tindahan; but she had said vile things to me before, which I had forgotten at once because they hadn't really mattered.

Then there was no dropping in the trail, which leveled out before me. The surrounding jungle dropped back, away from me on all sides, giving way to a clearing whose limits I could only guess at. The way was smooth and soggy, damp and desolate, with rain all through it, and clouds that were clammy as the touch of cadaverous hands. I raised myself slightly on my hands, straightened my arms, and strove to peer through the desolation, seeking a light which would be a sign of shelter. I did not stand erect, even here. My legs were numb, as were my hips and torso, and I could not bear even the thought of the pain standing erect would cause me. My poor hands! Numb and bleeding I knew them to be. I lowered my head, when I could not discover a light, to look at my hands. But I could not see them—it was so dark. It was as though, almost, I *had* no arms or hands; as though I raised my torso, bowing my back, with neither hands nor arms to brace me.

THERE was water, slimy water, which moved sluggishly as I moved, throughout the clearing. I peered across its surface, back the way I had come. For the feeling that someone, or something, followed me still possessed me, though some of my fear was gone, lost in numbed resignation. I saw a bit of

blackness, like a bit of driftwood, just this side of the spot where I had entered the clearing. And, beyond the bit of driftwood, spreading out like a fan, the slimy water was in commotion. It made me think, that agitation of the slimy water, of triangular fins I had seen on the bosom of Subic Bay—and the spreading wake which stretched rearward behind them! That bit of driftwood, then, was in motion—and it was moving toward me! I turned my head, with a movement which surprised me, a movement that was slow and sinuous, and I crawled along across the clearing.

Off to my right I saw another bit of driftwood; but this one stood higher above the slime, and, like the first, it moved, and there was a spreading wake behind it. When I saw it, it paused in its motion, as though it had been a thing of life, and had seen me, and had been startled. And then the bit of driftwood did a strange and awful thing. It reared up higher from the slime, curved over pliantly, and disappeared beneath the water.

I paused, raised up my head again, as high as I could force my torso with my hands, and looked to every side across the face of the desolate slimy water. I discovered that there were countless bits of driftwood, that every one was in motion, aimless, undirected motion and that there was a spreading wake behind each one. . . .

Then it was that I remembered the words of the keeper of the tindahan!

"And you shall go down into the Place of the Pythons for your sins!"

BUT, strangely enough, I was not frightened. Something told me, in words, or in impressions, which I understood, but could not translate into any language, that I had nothing to fear. I looked back

at the mallet-head which had followed me. I knew it all now, since I had peered at the waving arms of the first spectral tree, and had seen the *one* arm which had not swayed and bent and crackled with the strain like all the others. That bit of driftwood now was right behind me, higher from the water, uprearing as it approached, until I could see two bits of flame, greenish and oddly beautiful, which peered at me. There was a forked tongue which leaped at me, drew back and leaped again, with wildly graceful movement.

The python, I knew him now, was not my enemy. He did not fear me, nor had he any designs against me; he knew he had naught to fear from me. He swept up to me, brushing all his sluggish length against that portion of me underneath the water left by the rain. In the touch of him there was an odd caress, as though we two were friends! There was an indescribable friendship in the python's touch, and I had a wild desire to thrust out my hand and press my fingertips against that mallet-head. But my hands refused. They were numb and refused to obey my will. So I contented myself by holding my body against the python's, until he had passed me, and, like that other one, with a swirling of the slime, had disappeared from sight.

Here and there in the slime I crawled. Odd how all my life I had never understood the creatures of the wild. Pythons, to me had always been creatures of nightmare, of unutterable horror. Yet here, with pythons all about me, they did not seem so dreadful. The storm, and the desolation, in which there was not another human being, had imbued me with a feeling of kinship for them. In spite of the vast world of evolution which stretched between them and me, I liked their

companionship, and did not wish to leave them.

HOURS passed, and with each passing minute one of the pythons would uprear his head and disappear into the slime, to appear no more. And I stayed on in the desolate clearing until the last of them had disappeared. When all had gone a feeling of infinite loneliness settled upon me. All my being cried out for sight or proximity of something else, or someone, who lived. But the pythons had gone, and the surface of the slimy water, save where I myself disturbed it, was glassy smooth. The rain had ceased, and the clouds had drawn back, so that I saw the edges of the clearing, on all sides, and the spectral trees with arms that now were motionless. . . .

With a sigh, which I couldn't really hear, I turned, describing a large circle in the slime, and started back the way I had come. I knew, now that the typhoon had passed, that I could retrace my steps to the first turning, and gain the deserted negrito encampment which I had occupied for so long. It was a long, long way back to that turning; but I had now, it seemed, no capacity for fatigue, though I made the journey on my stomach. I found the way, which should have been plain at first, and after some progress on the well-remembered trail, I saw before me the deserted village of the little blacks.

Only now it was not deserted! There was a flickering light in the chief's house, the very house I had occupied for so long. No matter, the negritos were my friends, and there would be shelter for me. I crawled along to the hut, from whose roof the water still dripped dismally, and raised my torso again with my hands, to peer into the hut.

There sat the chief, just as all negritos sit, on his heels, peering out into the darkness whence I was coming. I would call to him as I entered, so that he would not be frightened. I raised my voice to call.

But I had no words of any language and the sound which came forth from the depth of me was a sullen, angry hiss!

WITH a scream of mortal terror the negrito chief sprang erect as he saw me. His hands went forth automatically, and swiftly grasped a bow and arrow. He drew the arrow to the tip and loosed it. I dodged, and the barbed tip missed my face. It plunged, instead, into my neck, and a murderous hatred for this man whom I had believed my friend flared up within my brain. I inched my way forward, across his threshold, trying to threaten him with words. And my hatred flamed more terribly, when, instead of intelligible speech, came only wordless hissing!

The negrito dropped his bow and and a second arrow, for I was now too close, and drew a knife from its sheath at his waist. Crouching low he waited for me, and I lurched upon him, undaunted by his knife—and literally wrapped my self about him!

Hissing in his face because I could not shout, I tightened my body about him. Before me I saw his eyes stand forth from their sockets, saw him increase in stature oddly, saw the blood suffuse his neck until all the neck was blue, the veins standing out like colored cords. His tongue protruded grotesquely, and finally blood gushed from his nostrils, and I heard a crackling sound as I felt his body give throughout its length. And I knew that murderous anger had filled me with such strength that I had broken many bones in the

wiry body of the negrito. I slipped back from him when I knew he was dead and—

But I cannot put into words the unbelievable, ghastly craving which came to me when I looked down upon the man, all crushed and unrecognizable as a man. Almost against my will I moved toward him again—and then drew back; moved ahead, drew back. . . . But the craving, the awful hunger which was mine—how can I put the unbelievable into words?

Whatever of the human there yet remained to me must have saved me. For I drew back from the man I had slain, reluctantly, it is true; turned away at last, and fled into the night.

Where does dream end and reality begin? Would to God I knew!

I remember entering the tindahan once more; I remember that it was deserted and silent, as though everyone had fled in terror. And through the little store I sought for the wispy-haired crone. I did not find her, but I found her room, and, relic of a past that may have had its bit of grandeur—a mirror, cracked and broken. But in its chipped and aged surface I caught a glimpse of myself. I swooned then, and fell; fell downward to where I could no longer see the horror in the looking-glass. And as I fell there slipped down the chipped length of the glass, a hideous mallet-head. My own reflection? Before God, I do not know!

I CAME back to consciousness at the table where I had sat when the keeper of the tindahan had started the tirade I was to remem-

ber all my days. The place was crowded with natives, and they were talking madly, all at once, of a great python which had been seen the night before. The monstrous creature, they said, was twenty feet long, and he had entered the negrito village, to which the natives had returned the day just previous, and had killed the chief terribly. From there he had come to the tindahan, and everyone had fled, save only a white man too drunk to move. In all the country around about I was the only white man! I looked at the shelf behind the counter. There, dust-covered, still stood the bottle of rare wine, as though it had never been touched!

My mind groped for the answer, for I knew I had not been drunk.

Besides, the wispy-haired keeper of the tindahan was leering at me, and her baleful old eyes were alight with dreadful knowledge. I saw where they were peering—

I made haste to pull the collar of my faded coat high up about my neck, to hide a tell-tale mark I knew was there—a mark which *might* have been made by an arrow that had grazed the flesh.

And, besides, from head to foot, I was covered with evil-smelling slime, the odor of which could not be mistaken. My hands were torn and bleeding, my feet were bare and bloodstained. . . .

It was strange, the natives chattered, that the white man had sat all through it at the table, and the marauding python had not taken him. Through all the excitement, they said, he had not moved.

But I? I knew better. And so did the keeper of the tindahan.

*“Cassius,” By Henry S. Whitehead
Is Coming!*



In the fitful glow of the fire was the woman.

The Dark Castle

By Marion Brandon

LOST on a mountain road—
and out of gas!

That worst possible combination of misfortunes for the tourist had overtaken us; worse than ever, with night now fallen on the unknown countryside around us, wrapping it in darkness, veiling the simplest objects in mystery, and endowing the most commonplace of sounds with sinister meaning. But there was no getting around the fact that the tank was as dry as the proverbial bone, and that no matter how Arescu and I cursed our luck, our car would never stir again until something could be procured to fill the empty gasoline tank.

The spirit of Archenfels broods ominously over the two stranded travelers in the deserted castle.

Nor was there any telling when that might be, for in the mountain districts of Central Europe sources of supply are few and far between. Wrong directions had been given us somewhere on the way from the

little city which we had left at noon; and instead of reaching the town that was our destination

before sundown, here we were, hours later, nowhere—and unable to move.

I was touring these remote regions with but one companion, a most likeable young fellow, a Roumanian, who had graduated that June from the college where I was an instructor. We had formed one of the peculiar friendships that

sometimes occur between an older man and a younger, and when the time came for him to return to his native country, he had suggested that I accompany him and make up a party of two for a summer of leisurely travel in such unfamiliar countries as Serbia, Bulgaria, and his own Roumania—where we were at the moment when our engine died on that tortuous road.

IT was very cold in the high, clear atmosphere, for it was late in August and autumn was approaching. Not a sound to break the silence but the eery screech of an owl and the faint rustle of the night wind in the undergrowth by the roadside, like the stealthy prowling of some hostile animal. Though the entire day had been heavily overcast and dull, the night was clear and starry, but black as the pit, for the moon had not yet risen; and beyond the small range of our headlights we could see not a thing.

"Well," I said resignedly as I sat down on the running-board, and filled my pipe, "this may be very romantic; but it's cold, too, and I'd give a good deal at this minute to be on a prosaic, concrete state highway, with a red gas-pump sure to turn up within half a mile!"

Arescu seated himself beside me. "It's only about an hour till moonrise," he said. "We can perhaps get some idea of where we are then. There must be a village somewhere. . . . Hear that dog that's just begun to howl? Wonder whose death *he's* heralding?"

I have never blamed the originator of the superstition that the repeated howling of a dog means impending death, for it is the most depressing and ominous of sounds—doubly so at night—and it was beginning to get on my nerves when Arescu said in surprise, "We're looking for the moon in the wrong

direction! I had expected it to come up on the right, behind us. . . . Look the other way."

I obeyed. To the left, the sky was softly golden, proclaiming the approach of the hidden moon, and throwing into bold relief the turrets and peaked roofs of a building.

Not a light in it anywhere; not a sound; not a sign of life. But at least it promised some degree of protection from the penetrating mountain wind which was by this time going through our clothing as if it were made of paper. Releasing the brakes of our useless car, we rolled it backward down the slight decline of the road for the few hundred feet that lay between us and the tall open gates, sagging heavily on their hinges. With a final effort, we pushed it through them, that the headlights might illumine the scene before us.

THE building was, as we had already surmised, a ruin; a small castle, or very large house, its paneless windows staring like hostile eyes from the embrasures of the rough stone walls. Some of its turrets were broken, like jagged teeth, others seemingly intact—all darkly outlined against the rapidly brightening sky. As we gazed, the golden rim of the moon rose above it; the shivering screech of the owl trembled through the chilly air, answered by the dismal howl of the distant dog. A scene of such unearthly desolation may I never behold again!

"Looks pretty solid at the right-hand end," Arescu remarked after we had examined it as fully as was possible from the distance at which we stood. And arming ourselves, each with an electric torch, we approached the building.

The huge iron-bound door sagged open like the gate; and passing in, we found ourselves in a great stone-floored hall, roofless and chill and

forbidding. At the right, however, a doorway opened, beyond which we discovered a smaller room in fair condition. It was but a single story high. The strong black beams that supported the ceiling were all in place and looked as if they would stay there. Boards had been pushed against the paneless windows; half-burned logs lay in the gaping stone fireplace, and in a corner of the room was a pile of dry wood.

"Not at all bad!" said Arescu, surveying the scene approvingly. "Others have camped here like ourselves. Made arrangements for a longer stay though, and apparently changed their minds. But the wood they didn't burn up will come in nicely for us!"

"I'll build up the fire," he went on, "while you start carrying in the rugs and food."

The moon had by this time risen high enough to render a torch unnecessary out of doors, its greenish silver radiance making the world almost as light as day. We were well prepared for camping out, with plenty of warm rugs, cans of soup, coffee, bread, bacon, and, fortunately, candles.

AS I went out for my last load, I was startled to find, standing by the car and gazing toward me, a woman. She was enveloped in a long, dark, hooded cloak which so shrouded her form and shadowed her face that I could form no idea of her age, though the voice in which she addressed me, in German, had the clear vigorous ring of youth. I could see only that her eyes were very bright, and her teeth remarkably fine and white between the scarlet lips that parted with her smile.

"Pardon," she said, "if I have startled you. But I live nearby, and strangers seldom come this way."

I expressed my surprise that people lived near, since I had seen no lights; and suggested that she could perhaps find us a warmer lodging for the night.

"My home is hardly large enough," she replied with that flashing, brilliant smile. "I came only to look—*this* time; but I shall perhaps see you—later." And as I gathered a few more articles from the back of the car, she wished me good night, and hurried away with sure steps down the dark road.

"Fine!" Arescu exclaimed when I reported the encounter. "Perhaps they have a small farm where we can get eggs for breakfast, and something on four legs to hunt gas with!"

Arescu was of a decidedly domestic turn; and by the time that he had spread a couple of our heavy traveling rugs on the floor by the roaring fire which he had built, and which was already having an effect upon the chilly atmosphere, stuck a candle at each end of the heavy stone chimney-piece, and set our camp coffee-pot on a brick to boil—he had found a well just outside—the ruined room looked almost cosy!

YET, for some unfathomable reason, I felt nervous and "edgy." I would gladly have strangled the distant owl and the more distant dog, each of which, at irregular intervals, continued to emit its eldritch lament. Just as I would think that they had knocked off for good, one or the other of the eery sounds would break out through the night. And the miserable dog seemed to be coming gradually nearer! A couple of bats flitted blunderingly about the room; the night wind prowled uneasily outside.

"I've always heard that you Central Europeans were a superstitious lot," I remarked as Arescu, whis-

ting cheerfully, set the finished coffee aside to keep hot, and placed over the fire a generous pan of bacon; "but here we are in what might be the setting for all sorts of horrors. It gives even me the creeps, and for all the effect it has on you, you might be fixing up a midnight mess in a college dormitory!"

Arescu sat back on his heels. "I'm just as superstitious as the next person—when I have reason to be," he replied in a perfectly matter-of-fact manner. "But plain 'creepy' surroundings don't disturb me in the least when I know there's nothing wrong."

"How do you know there's nothing wrong with this place?" I asked curiously. "You never saw it before, did you?"

"Never." Arescu placidly arranged the crisp, hot bacon between slices of bread, and poured the coffee into enamel cups. "But there is only one haunted place—a vampire castle—in this entire region; and it's on a road leading out of the other side of Koslo from the direction we took this noon. There's nothing else within a hundred miles that's credited with even the mildest of spectres!"

"And you really do believe in the supernatural?" I demanded incredulously. "You wouldn't sleep here if the place were called haunted?"

"MY good friend," said Arescu, for the moment unwontedly serious, as he turned his dark eyes on mine. "It seems strange, I know, to a native of the great supercivilized United States that supposedly intelligent people can believe the unbelievable—that is, unbelievable from your point of view. But, after all, the powers of darkness love—the dark; and isn't it only reasonable to think that they shun the more

civilized and populous regions of the earth, and cling to the remote and little-known places? Granted that the idea of a spectre or spirit seems preposterous to one sitting comfortably in his modern well-lighted home, or driving along a traveled highway. But, if you were told that *this* was haunted, would it seem so ridiculous?"

The sinister howl of the dog, nearer beyond all question, answered him.

"Knowing that it isn't," he added. "I'm as happy as I'd be in the finest of hotels. But if this were Archenfels, you may be certain that I shouldn't be here!"

And as we devoured our hot supper, this astonishing young man whose American education had not shaken one whit his belief in supernatural manifestations told me the story of the Vampire Castle.

"It's twenty miles out in the mountains, to the west of Koslo," he said. "Hasn't been lived in for over a century. It had been for hundreds of years the perfectly peaceful home of a noble family, who had to abandon it, a hundred and twenty years or so ago, when it suddenly became vampire-haunted, for no reason that anyone could think of. First the eldest son and heir was found dead in his bed; then his brothers, one after the other, at considerable intervals. After the original owners got out in despair, a few attempts at living in it were made by others who hoped to get a fine estate at little cost, but it was just the same; a series of mysterious deaths. Always men, too—young men; never a woman. Grin as much as you like," he reproved me, "but in every case, the same little sharp wound was to be found in the throat of the victim!"

"NOBODY has knowingly spent a night there in over a century, as I have said," he went on.

"But now and again a traveler has done so—as we are doing here—and always with the same dire result; the finding of his body, sometimes long afterward, the throat marked by that cruel little wound. No one lives near it any more; its only neighbors are the dead in the churchyard of an old ruined church.

"No, Professor," he finished with his engaging young smile, "if this were Archenfels, I should be running now with a speed that would surprise you! As it is, in our cosy spot, with neighbors not far, I shall sleep soundly; and I wish you the same."

With that, he wrapped himself in one of our extra rugs, lay down by the fire, and with his coat for a pillow, fell asleep almost immediately. I suddenly felt very lonely.

But though I tried my best to follow his example, it was of no use. The fire was burning low. The bats, joined by others, still blundered among the wavering shadows; the rising wind moaned outside, as it tried one window after another. The last howl of the accursed dog was surely much nearer! I shouldn't have drunk that coffee so late at night; shouldn't let my mind play with the boy's ghastly tale of the ruined castle; haunted by those hideous visitants who are said to feed upon the blood of their living victims. . . .

Suddenly, as I lay staring at the dying fire, my heart seemed actually to stop—then to race thundering in my ears. Icy sweat crept out upon my body. Though I had heard nothing, I *knew* that someone—*something*—was in the room, advancing soundlessly upon us from the doorway behind me!

With a desperate effort, I fought down the engulfing terror that had laid hold on me, and turned my head.

COMING slowly toward me across the room, in the fitful glow of the failing fire, was the woman who had spoken to me at the gate. But how terribly, how awesomely, changed! The long cloak had been cast aside, revealing a white gown of olden fashion; the face, shadowed before by the dark hood, exhibited a strangely bright pink-and-white quality that was not human. The lips, red as blood, were parted in a mocking smile. Her fingers were claw-like, and suggested the talons of a bird of prey.

And the eyes! I could not—heaven help me—remove my own from the baleful gaze with which they fixed on me. They fascinated me, like the eyes of some deadly serpent. I could neither move nor speak. I lay inert, paralyzed and cold.

"Welcome to Archenfels!" she said, smiling a terrible smile of derisive triumph. "It has long lain untenanted, and I have had to go far afield."

Archenfels! The castle of dread repute! Paralyzed as my body had become, my brain was clear as I groped frantically for an explanation of the horror.

Archenfels, Arescu had said, was to the west of the city; we had gone east. Impossible! . . . Yet, as I stared into the narrowed cruel eyes of the scarlet-mouthed creature whose sharp teeth shone white in the flickering light of the fire, I knew that it was not impossible; knew that there are indeed more terrible things in the world than man dare dream of. . . . Some of the country people of whom we had asked directions had doubtless given wrong ones, and with the sun overcast as it had been all day, it had been easy enough to lose our sense of direction and circle around. Simple enough to understand—*now*, when it was too late!

FRANTICALLY I struggled to break the hold of those awful eyes. Sweat streamed from every pore; yet I lay inert as a log. Not a movement could I make; not a finger could I lift. Nor could I, by the most desperate striving, remove my gaze from hers. If I could do that, something told me, the spell would dissolve. I might attack her, and perhaps save our lives. . . . But can the sparrow look away from the beady eyes of the snake gliding toward it?

All this time, Arescu lay sleeping as quietly as a baby, one arm over his heart, the other thrown out upon the coverlet, his slow, regular breathing the only sound in the room. A heavy graveyard odor of damp earth and decay stifled me as the creature came closer—*closer!* Stepped past me; but always facing me, never taking those terrible eyes from mine. . . . Knelt by Arescu, and, gathering his slumbering form into her arms, bared her shining teeth. . . .

As she paused, still holding me chained by that unwavering gaze, I thought in blind revulsion, of a tiger crouching over its prey, glaring jealously, lest another beast interfere.

Disturbed from the deep sleep of youth and health, Arescu opened his eyes. For an instant he stared, blankly and uncomprehendingly, as if in a nightmare. Then over his handsome young face swept a look of stark frozen horror that I shall see in my dreams till my last day. Under the very window the dog suddenly howled, long and despairingly.

I think that the boy died at once from shock. I hope he did. For when I realized to the full the appalling thing that was about to occur, a thing which I cannot even now put into words, I felt that I, too, was dying—and merciful unconsciousness overcame me. . . .

AFTER what seemed an eternity of struggling, submerged in blackness, I won back to consciousness, confusedly aware of a white form slipping out through the door. Weak and dizzy, I sat up. The room was still. The fire had sunk to a few sullen embers. Even the wind had died, and I, thank heaven, was no longer in the grip of that nefarious gaze!

Snatching the torch that lay beside me, I turned its beam upon the crumpled young figure by the hearth.

No need to look a second time; to feel the pulseless wrist! The terrible unearthly pallor of the boyish face, the ghastly, drained grayness, was enough. Boiling rage seized upon me. Where had the foul creature gone? To find others of her kind, and tell them that a living man still survived in the accursed castle, material for another grim feast?

Demented and without plan, I rushed out into the night. Across the lawn, plain in the clear green moonlight, a white form was passing through the great gate. I dashed after it in mad pursuit as, realizing that it was followed, it fled, fleet as the wind itself, down the rough mountain road.

Never once did I raise my eyes from the level of its feet as, with bursting lungs, I labored after the flying shape. Not again would I fall a victim to that dread gaze!

I was almost upon it when it suddenly veered to the left. Unable to check myself, I ran past the little gate in the stone wall, thus permitting the monster to gain time. Halting as quickly as possible, I turned and rushed through the gate—into a graveyard. . . . Yes, there were the fluttering robes before me, silver in the moonlight; the streaming golden hair. With a final mighty effort, temples pounding, pulses throbbing, I gained

upon my quarry. No more than twenty feet separated us when it suddenly stopped, laid hold upon an ancient slanting tombstone—and vanished into the earth. . . .

Sick with horror, and utterly exhausted, I dropped beside the grave; and for a second time that night—and the second in all my life—a wave of unconsciousness swept over me. . . .

WHEN I came to myself, the stars were paling before the rosy light in the east; cocks crowed in the distance; birds twittered in the trees. Lame and stiff, I struggled to my feet.

I was standing in an old cemetery, disused, apparently, for many years. The aged lichened tombstones were canted drunkenly this way and that; the ruined little church was half-hidden in overgrown shrubbery. All as poor Arescu had described the fateful region, had we but been able to see! For some reason, I drove a little stick into the grave at my feet—her home was indeed small!—and hastened back along the road to the dire castle of Archenfels.

Here I found many people grouped around our car, all talking excitedly, but in hushed tones, and pale with fear. Others were within. As I entered the room of death, a tall old priest rose from his knees beside the body of Arescu, now decently arranged, with eyes closed and hands crossed.

We both spoke German, and the priest told his story. A small farmer, living across the valley from Archenfels, had seen our lights in the night, and had, at first peep of dawn, hastened to the village to report what could mean but one thing—another tragedy. Practically the entire population had accompanied him to the castle, to find what they had feared, a new victim of the vampire. They

had deduced that two people had occupied the room; and upon my explaining where I had been, the priest's dark eyes lighted strangely.

"Sir," he inquired eagerly, "do you know where she disappeared?"

"I do, indeed!" I answered. "I marked the spot."

An incomprehensible look flashed from face to face among the listeners as the priest translated my reply; and one woman, with tears streaming down her cheeks, knelt and kissed my hand.

"I think, sir," said the priest slowly, after he had given some directions in his own tongue to several of the men present, "that, shocking as this experience has been for you, you have been the instrument for saving the countryside from a great fear. I will explain to you as we return to the graveyard."

THE priest's story tallied closely with Arescu's—with a grim addition. The victims of the attacks were, as the boy had said, always men, young men, a fact which doubtless accounted for my own survival. But during the hundred years that the castle had stood untenanted, the number of young men who by chance spent a night there had been insufficient to satisfy the creature's blood-lust; and now and again, some village lad would be found, dead in his bed, a sharp little wound plain in his throat. The last victim, two years before, had been a son of the woman who had kissed my hand; and as she had two other living sons, her fear had been great.

None, but the dead, had ever seen the destroyer; no description had ever been given; no theory could be formed as to its sudden origin in so peaceful a district. The village had taken such steps as it could. The few graves of suicides, and others who had died violent

deaths, situated outside the graveyard wall beyond the consecrated area, had been opened long ago, for such unfortunates were said sometimes to become vampires. But the rotting coffins had contained nothing suspicious; only the moldering bones that would be natural. And one cannot open all the graves in an old cemetery with no clues to go on!

Long beams of morning sunlight were stretching across the dewy grass when we arrived at the one that I had marked. "Helena Barrientos," read the almost obliterated inscription upon the stone. "Died August 5, 1799, aged twenty years."

For a time we waited there, the people behind us, all silent under the solemn spell of impending strange events, until the men to whom the priest had spoken his orders returned, some with picks, shovels and ropes, and one with a long strong stake, sharpened at one end. A lad carried the processional cross from the village church.

Amid a deep strained silence, they set to work, the pile of fresh black clods rising rapidly beside the excavation. Then came the dull sound of blows upon rotting wood. The hole was made wide and deep enough to permit the workers to descend into it, the earth carefully cleared from around the coffin, too frail with age to bear removal from its place. The lid was loosened, lifted off. . . .

Cries of horror rose from those crowding around the grave. As for me, my brain reeled. Even then, I could not believe my own eyes.

LYING before us, in the decayed old coffin, with the fresh rosy coloring and scarlet lips of a child asleep, was the terrible visitant of the night before! But now, everything terrible about her was gone. The eyes which had exercised their dread power of fas-

cination were quietly closed, the red lips pressed together. . . . A corpse, fresh and bright as the living, where should lie a heap of disintegrating bones!

"You see!" said the old priest simply.

A little metal box lay beside the body, and this he opened, disclosing a letter written in faded, but still legible, ink. Slowly and solemnly he read it aloud:

"I confess to God—but not to man—that this, my daughter, met her death by her own hand. I wish that my child, wronged and mistaken though she has been, shall lie in consecrated ground, for I fear that she will not rest outside. For a day after her death I told others that she was grievously ill; then, that she had died. I prepared her for the grave myself; and none suspect. May God forgive her. She had much provocation, having been heartlessly betrayed by the young lord of Archenfels, though I alone know. May God forgive me, too, her mother."

Amid a profound hush the priest folded up the tragic message from a long-gone day, and let himself down into the grave. The sharpened stake was passed to him. Grasping it in his right hand, he received in his left the shining brass cross. Even I, stranger and skeptic though I had been, had heard tales of the grim method of exorcising vampires, and I held my breath with the rest as we watched.

Murmuring a Latin sentence, he raised the sharpened stake.

"May God have mercy on your soul!" he said. And plunged the point into the heart of the body before him.

A gasp of mingled relief and horror rose from all who could see into the grave. In the winking of an eyelid, the corpse vanished. Only a disintegrating skeleton lay in the coffin in a pool of bright red

blood that was running rapidly out through the cracks, and soaking into the rich black earth.

"May God have mercy!" said the priest once more, in the sonorous rolling Latin of the Church, and with infinite compassion in his tone.

"Amen!" answered the people. And went their ways.

THAT is all.

I remember but little of the trip back to the ancient city of Koslo where I spent nearly a month in the hospital, delirious much of the time.

When I had recovered enough to study a map of the region, it was easy to see how we had wandered into the fatal neighborhood. The road on which Archenfels stood left the city in a westerly direction, it is true, but soon bore decidedly south, while ours, going east at first, also bent south before very long. The wrong direction

given us had put us on a road that joined the two, and our own wanderings had done the rest.

If only the sun had not been hidden! If only we had reached the dread spot before night veiled the scene.

The college granted me leave of absence for a year, and I am somewhat better now. But my hair is white at forty, and I know that never again shall I have the nervous balance of a normal human being.

The doctors said that it might help me to write it all out—"get it off my mind," in a measure. I think that it has helped. And I feel too that if the recital of my experience brings others to the realization that there are still dark and terrible things to be encountered in this "commonplace" world of to-day, and restrains them from speaking—or even thinking—lightly of them, I shall at least have accomplished something of good.

The Death of Bolster

THE legend is told of the strange wooing and peculiar death of the famous Giant Bolster, who lived near Chapel Porth in Cornwall. However it may have happened, Bolster fell deeply in love with St. Agnes, a woman who is reputed to have been very beautiful and a model of virtue. He allowed the lady no repose, but followed her incessantly, proclaiming his love and filling the heavens with his tempestuous sighs and groans.

St. Agnes lectured the gigantic Bolster in vain on the impropriety of his conduct, especially as he was already a married man, but her words availed nothing, and neither did her prayers. So the persecuted lady in desperation evolved the following stratagem to get rid of him:

She pretended to be persuaded of the intensity of Bolster's love, but told him she required yet one small proof more. If Bolster would go to the hole that existed in the cliff at the termination of the valley at Chapel Porth, and would fill this hole with his blood, she would no longer look coldly on him. The Giant Bolster thought that it was but an easy thing that was required of him, and felt that he could fill many such holes and be none the weaker for the loss of blood. So, going to the place, and stretching his arm across the hole, he plunged his knife into a vein

and watched a torrent of blood issue forth. Roaring and seething the blood fell to the bottom, and the giant expected very soon to see the hole fill up, and so pass the last test of his devotion.

The hole required much more blood than he had supposed; but nevertheless he allowed himself to bleed on, expecting it would not be long. But hour after hour the blood flowed from the vein, and still the hole was not filled.

It never was to be. At last the Giant fainted from the weakness caused by his loss of blood. Once, for a moment, the extraordinary vitality in his mighty frame allowed him to come to, but he lacked the strength to lift himself from the ground, and under the circumstances he was unable to staunch the wound he had made. Soon he was dead.

The cunning St. Agnes was well aware in proposing this task to Bolster that the hole opened at the bottom into the sea, and that as rapidly as the blood flowed into the hole it would pour into the boundless reservoir of the ocean.

So runs the legend.

It is interesting to note that to this day this hole may be seen at Chapel Porth, and that this hole is marked with the same red stain said to have been left by the path of the Giant's blood.



And suddenly it jumped.

Dr. Muncing, Exorcist

By Gordon MacCreagh

THE brass plate upon the gate post of the trim white wicket said only: "Dr. Muncing, Exorcist."

Aside from that, the house was just the same as all the others in that street—semi-detached, stuccoed, respectable. A few more brass plates announced other sober citizens with their sprinkling of doctors of law and doctors of medicine and one of divinity. But Dr.

Muncing, Exorcist; that was darkly suggestive of something queer.

The man who gazed reflectively out of the window at the driving-rain was, like his brass sign, vaguely suggestive, too, of something queer; of having the capacity to do something that the other sober

Dr. Muncing challenges a malignant entity—a Thing of Hate out of the Unknown Void.

citizens, doctors and lawyers, did not do.

He was of a little more than middle height, broad, with strong, capable

looking hands; his face was square cut, finely criss-crossed with weather-beaten lines, tanned from much travel in far-away lands; a strong nose hung over a thin, wide mouth that closed with an extraordinary determination.

The face of a normal man of strong character. It was the eyes that conveyed that vague impression of something unusual. Deep set, they were, of an indeterminate color, hidden beneath a frown of reflective brows; brooding eyes, suggestive of a knowledge of dark things that other sober citizens did not know.

The other man who stared out of the other window was younger, bigger in every way; an immense young fellow who carried in his big shoulders and clean complexion every mark of having devoted more of his college years to the study of football rather than of medicine. This one grunted an ejaculation.

"I'll bet a dollar this is a patient for you."

Dr. Muncing came over to the other window.

"I don't bet dollars with Dr. James Terry. Gambling seems to have been one of the few things you did really well at John College. The fellow does look plentifully frightened, at that."

THE man in question was hurrying down the street, looking anxiously at the house numbers; bent over, huddled in a rain coat, he read the numbers furtively, as though reluctant to turn his head out of the protection of his up-turned collar. He uttered a glad cry as he saw the plate of Dr. Muncing, Exorcist, and, letting the gate slam, he stumbled up the path to the door.

Dr. Muncing met the man personally, led him to a comfortable chair, mixed a stimulant for him, offered him a cigarette. Calm, me-

thodical, matter-of-fact, this was his "bedside manner" with such cases. Forcefully he compelled the impression that, whatever might be the trouble, it was nothing that could not be cured. He stood waiting for an explanation. The man stammered an incoherent jumble of nothings.

"I—Doctor, I don't know how—I can't tell you what it is, but the Reverend Hendryx sent me to you. Yet I don't know what to tell you; there's nothing to describe."

"Well," said the doctor judicially, "that is already interesting. If there's nothing and if the Reverend Hendryx feels that he can't pray it away, we probably have something that we can get hold of."

His manner was dominant and cheerful, he radiated confidence. His bulky young assistant had been cleverly chosen for just that purpose also, to assist in putting over the impression of power, of force to deal with queer and horrible things that could not be sanely described.

The man began to respond to that atmosphere. He got a grip on himself and began to speak more coherently:

"Doctor, I don't know what to tell you. There have been no—no spooks, or anything of that sort. We've seen nothing; heard nothing. It's only a feeling. I—you'll laugh at me, Doctor, but—it's just a something in the dark that brings a feeling of awful fear; and I know that it will catch me. Last night—my God, last night it almost touched me."

"I never laugh," said Dr. Muncing seriously, "until I have laid my ghost. For some ghosts are horribly real. Tell me something about yourself, your family, your home and so on. And as to your fears, whatever they are, please don't try to conceal them from me."

A BAFFLED expression came over the man's face. He could not divorce his personal affairs from the quite commonplace.

"There's nothing to tell, Doctor; nothing that's different to anybody else. I don't know what could bring this frightful thing about us. I—my name is Jarrett—I sell real estate up in the Catskills. I have a little place a hundred feet off the paved state road; two miles from the village. There's nothing old or dilapidated about the house; there's modern plumbing, electric lights, and so on. No old grave yards anywhere in the neighborhood. Not a single thing to bring this horror; and yet—I tell you, Doctor, there's something frightful in the dark that we can feel."

"Hm-m!" The doctor pursed his lips and walked a short beat, his hands deep in his pockets. "A new house; no old associations. Begins to sound like an elemental, only how would such a thing have gotten loose? Or it might be a malignant geoplasm, but— Tell me about your family, Mr. Jarrett."

"There's only four of us, Doctor. There's my wife's brother, who's an invalid; and—"

"Ah-h!" A quick breath came from the doctor. "So there's a sick man, yes? What is his trouble?"

"His lungs are affected. He was advised to come to us for the mountain air; and he was getting very much better; but recently he's very much worse again. We've been thinking that perhaps this constant terror has been too much for him."

"**H**M-M, yes, indeed." The doctor strode his quick beat back and forth; his indeterminate eyes were distinctly steel gray just now. "Yes, yes, the terror, and the sick man who grows worse. Quite so. Who else, Mr. Jarrett? What else have you that might attract a visophagig entity?"

"A viso-what? Good God, Doctor, we haven't anything to attract anything. Besides my wife's brother there's only my son, ten years of age, and my wife. She gets it worse than any of us; she says she has even seen—but I think there's a lot of blarney in all that." The man contrived a sick smile. "You know how women are, Doctor; she says she has seen shapes—formless things in the dark. She likes to think she is psychic, and she is always seeing things that nobody else knows anything about."

"Oh, good Lord!" Dr. Muncing groaned and his face was serious. "Verily do fools rush in. All the requirements for piercing the veil. Heavens, what idiots people can be."

Suddenly he shot an accusing finger at Mr. Jarrett.

"I suppose she makes you sit round a table with her, and all that sort of stuff."

"Yes, Doctor, she does. Raps and spelt out messages, and so on."

"Good Lord!" The doctor walked angrily back and forth. "Fools by the silly thousand play with this kind of fire, and this time these poor simpletons have broken in on something."

He whirled on the frightened realtor with accusing finger laying down the law.

"Mr. Jarrett, your foolish wife doesn't know what she has done. I myself don't know what she has turned loose or what this thing might develop into. We may be able to stop it. It may escape and grow into a world menace. I tell you we humans don't begin to know what forces exist on the other side of that thin dividing line that we don't begin to understand. The only thing to do now is to come with you immediately to your home; and we must try and find out what this thing is that has broken through and whether we can stop it."

THE Jarrett house turned out exactly as described. Modern and commonplace in every way; situated in an acre of garden and shrubbery on a sunlit slope of the Catskill Mountains. The other houses of the straggly little village were much the same, quiet residences of normal people who preferred to retire a little beyond the noise and activity of the summer resort of Pine Bend about two miles down the state road.

The Jarrett family fitted exactly into their locale. Well meaning, hospitable rural nonentities. The lady who was psychic was over-plump and short of breath at that elevation; the son, a gangling school-boy, evinced the shy aloofness of country youth before strangers; the sick man, thin and drawn, with an irritable cough, showed the unnatural flush of color on his cheeks that marked his disease.

It required very much less than Dr. Muncing's keenness to see that all of these people were in a condition of nervous tension that in itself was proof of something that had made quite an extraordinary effect on their unimaginative minds.

Dilated eyes, tremulous limbs, backward looks; all these things showed that something had brought this unfortunate family to the verge of a panic that reached the very limits of their control.

The doctor was an adept at dispelling that sort of jumpiness. Such a mental condition was the worst possible for combating "influences," whatever they might be.

He acknowledged his introductions with easy confidence, and then he held up his hand.

"No, no, nix on that. Give me a chance to breathe. D'you want to ruin my appetite with horrors? Let's eat first and then you can spread yourselves out on the story. No ghost likes a full stomach."

He was purposely slangy. The

immediate effect was that his hosts experienced a measure of relief. The man radiated such an impression of knowledge, of confidence, of power.

THE meal, however, was at best a lugubrious one. Conversation had to be forced to dwell on ordinary subjects. The wife evinced a painful disinclination to go into the kitchen. "Our cook left us two days ago," she explained. The boy was silent and frightened. The sick man said little, and coughed a dry, petulant bark at intervals.

The doctor, engrossed in his plate, chattered gaily about nothing; but all the time he was watching the invalid like a hawk. James Terry did his best to distract attention from the expert's scrutiny of everybody and everything in the room. By the time the meal was over the doctor had formed his opinion about the various characteristics and idiosyncracies of his hosts, and he dominated the company with his expansive cheerfulness.

"Well, now, let's get one of those satisfying smokes in the jimmy pipe, and you can tell me all about it. You"—selecting the lady—"you tell me. I'm sure you'll give the best account."

The lady, flustered and frightened, was able to add very little to what her husband had already described. There was nothing to add. A baffling nothingness enshrouded the whole situation; but it was a nothingness that was full of an unnamable fear—a feeling of terror enhanced by the "shapes" of the wife's psychic imaginings. A nameless nothing to be combated.

THE doctor shrugged with impatience. He had met with just such conditions before: the inability of people to describe their ghostly happenings with coherence. He decided on a bold experiment.

"My dear lady," he said, devoting his attention to the psychic one, "it is difficult to exorcise a mere feeling until we know something about the cause of it. Now I'll tell you what we ought to do. When you sit at your table for your little séances you get raps and so on, don't you? And you spell out messages from your 'spirit friends,' isn't it? And you'd like to go into a trance and let your 'guides' control you; only you are a little nervous about it; and all that kind of stuff, no?"

"Why, yes, Doctor, that is just about what happens, but how should you know all that?"

"Hm," grunted the doctor dryly. "You are not alone in your foolishness, my dear lady; there are many thousands in the United States who take similar chances. But now what I want to suggest is, let's have one of your little séances now. And you will go into a trance this time and perhaps you—I mean your guides—will tell us something. In the trance condition, which after all is a form of hypnosis—though we do not know whether the state is auto-induced or whether it is due to the suggestion of an outside influence—in this hypnotic condition the subconscious reflexes are sensitive to influences that the more material conscious mind cannot receive."

MRS. JARRETT'S plump hand fluttered to her breast. This was so sudden; and she had really been a little bit afraid of her séances since this terror came into the house. But the doctor was already arranging the little round table and the chairs. Without looking round, he said:

"You need not be at all nervous this time. And I want your brother particularly to stay in the room, though not necessarily at the table. Jimmy, you sit aside and steno-

whatever comes through, will you." And in a quiet aside to his friend, he added, "Sit near the switch, and if I holler, throw on the lights instantly and see that the sick man gets a stimulant. I may be busy."

Under the doctor's experienced direction everything was soon ready. Just the four sat at the table, the Jarrett family and the doctor. The sick brother sat tucked in an arm chair by the window and Jimmy Terry near the light switch at the door. Once more the doctor cautioned the brawny Terry:

"Watch this carefully, Jimmy. I'm putting the sick man's life into your hands. If you feel anything, if you sense anything, if you *think* anything near him, snap on the lights. Don't ask anything. Act. Ready? All right then, black out."

With the click of the switch the room was in darkness through which came only the petulant cough of the sick man. As the eyes accustomed themselves to the gloom there was sufficient glow from the moonlight outside to distinguish the dim outlines of figures.

"THIS is what you usually do, isn't it?" asked the doctor. "Hands on the table and little fingers touching?" And without waiting for the reply of which he seemed to be so sure, he continued, "All the usual stuff, I see. But now, Mrs. Jarrett, I'm going to lay my hands over yours and you will go into a trance. So. Quiet and easy now. Let yourself go."

In a surprisingly short space of time the table shivered with that peculiar inward tremor so familiar to all dabblers in the psychic. Shortly thereafter it heaved slowly up and descended with a vast deliberation. There was a moment's stillness fraught with effort; then a rhythmic tap-tap-tap of one leg.

"Now," said the doctor authoritatively. "You will go into a trance,

Mrs. Jarrett. Softly, easily. Let go. You're going into a trance. Going . . . going. . . ." His voice was soothingly commanding, hypnotic.

Mrs. Jarrett moaned, her limbs jerked, she stretched as if in pain; then with a sigh she became inert.

"Watch out, Jimmy," the doctor warned in a low voice. Then to the woman: "Speak. Where are you? What do you see?"

The plump, limp bulk moaned again. The lips moved; inarticulate sounds proceeded from them, the fragments of unformed words; then a quivering sigh and silence. The doctor took occasion to lean first to one side and then to the other to listen to the breathing of Mr. Jarrett and the boy. Both were a little faster than normal; under the circumstances, not strange. With startling suddenness words cut the dark, clear and strong.

"**I** AM in a place full of mist, I don't know where. Gray mist." A labored silence. Then: "I am at the edge of something; something deep, dark." A pause. "Before me is a curtain, dim and misty—no—it seems—I think—no, it is the mist that is the curtain. There are dim things moving beyond the curtain."

"Ha!" An exclamation of satisfaction from the doctor.

"I can't make them out. They are not animals; not people. They are dark things. Just—shapes."

"Good God, that's what she said before!" The awed gasp was Mr. Jarrett's.

The sick man coughed gratingly.

"The shapes move, they twine and roll and swell up. They bulge up against the curtain as if to push through. It is dark; too dark on that side to see. I am afraid if one might push through—"

Suddenly the boy whimpered:

"I don't like this. It's cold, an' I'm scared."

The doctor could hear the hard breathing of Mr. Jarrett on his left as the table trembled under his sudden shiver. The doctor himself experienced an enveloping depression, an almost physical crawling of the cold hairs up and down his spine. The sick man went into a spasm of violent coughing. Suddenly the voice screamed:

"One of the shapes is almost—my God, it is through! It's on this side. I can see—oh God, save me."

"Lights, Jimmy!" snapped the doctor. "Look to the sick man."

The swift flood of illumination showed Mr. Jarrett gray and beaded with perspiration; the boy in wild-eyed terror; Terry, too, big-eyed, and nervously alert. All of them had felt a sudden stifling weight of a clutching fear that seemed to hang like a destroying wave about to break.

The sick man was in a paroxysm of coughing from which he passed into a swoon of exhaustion. Only the woman had remained blissfully unconscious. The voice that had spoken out of her left her untroubled. In heavy peacefulness she slumped in her trance condition.

THE doctor leaped round the table to her and placed his hands over her forehead in protection from he did not know exactly what. A chill still pervaded the room; a physical sense of cold and lifting of hair. Some enormous material menace had almost been able to swoop upon a victim. Slowly, with the flashing on of the lights, the horror faded.

The doctor bent over the unconscious lady. Smoothly he began to stroke her face, away from the center towards her temples. As he stroked he talked, softly, reassuringly.

Presently the woman shuddered, heaved ponderously. Her eyes opened blankly, without comprehen-

sion. Wonder dawned in them at the confusion.

"I must have been asleep," she murmured; and she was able to smile sheepishly. "Tell me, did I—did my guides speak?"

That foolish, innocent question, coming from the only one in the room who knew nothing of what had happened, served to dissipate fear more than all the doctor's reassurances. The others began to take hold of themselves. The doctor was able to turn his attention to the sick man.

"How is his pulse, Jimmy? Hmm, weak, but still going. He's just exhausted. That thing drew an awful lot of strength out of him. It nearly slipped one over on me; I didn't think it was through into this side yet."

To his hosts he said with impressive gravity:

"It is necessary to tell you that we are faced with a situation that is more dangerous than I had thought. There is in this thing a distinct physical danger; it has gone beyond imagination and beyond 'sensing' things. We are up against a malignant entity that is capable of human contacts. We must get the patient up to bed and then I shall try to explain what this danger is."

HE took the limp form in his arms with hardly an effort and signified to Mrs. Jarrett to lead the way. To all appearances it was no more than an unusually vigorous physician putting a patient to bed. But the doctor made one or two quite extraordinary innovations.

"Fresh air to the contrary," he said grimly. "Windows must remain shut and bolted. Let me see: iron catches are good. And, Johnny, you just run down to the kitchen and bring me up a fire iron—a poker, tongs, anything. A stove lid lifter will do."

The boy clung to the close edges

of the group. The doctor nodded with understanding.

"Mr. Jarrett, will you go? We mustn't leave our patient until we have him properly protected."

In a few moments Mr. Jarrett returned with a plain iron kitchen poker. That was just the thing, the doctor said. He placed it on the floor close along the door jamb. He herded the others out and, coming last himself, shut the door, pausing just a moment to note that the lock was of iron, after which he followed the wondering family down to the living room. They sat expectant, uneasy.

"Now," the doctor began, as though delivering a lecture. "I want you all to listen carefully, because—I must tell you this, much as I dislike to frighten you—this thing has gone so far that a single misstep may mean a death."

He held up his hand. "No, don't interrupt. I'm going to try to make clear what is difficult enough anyhow; and you must all try to understand it because an error now—even a little foolishness, a moment of forgetfulness—can open the way for a tragedy; because—now let me impress you with this—the thing that you have felt is a palpable force. I can tell you what it is, but I cannot tell you how it came to break into this side. This malignant force is"—he paused to weigh his words—"an elemental. I do not know how the thing was released. Maybe you had nothing to do with it. But you, madam,"—accusingly to the trembling Mrs. Jarrett—"you caused it by monkeying with this séance business, about the dangers of which you know nothing. Nor have you taken the trouble even to read up on the subject. You have opened the way to attract this thing to your house; you and the unfortunate innocent sick man up stairs." You've actually invited it to live among you."

THE faces of the audience expressed only fear of the unknown; fear and a blank lack of understanding. The doctor controlled his impatience and continued his lecture.

"I can't go into the complete theory of occultism here and now; but this much you must understand," he said, pounding his fist on his knee for emphasis: "it is an indubitable fact, known throughout the ages of human existence, and re-established by modern research, that there exist certain vast discarnate forces alongside of us and all around us. These forces function according to certain controlling laws, just as we do. They probably know as little about our laws as we do about theirs.

"There are many kinds of these forces. Forces of a high intelligence, far superior to ours; forces of possibly less intelligence; benevolent forces; malignant ones. They are all loosely generalized as spirits: elementals, subliminals, earthbounds and so on.

"These forces are separated from us, prevented from contact, by—what shall I say? I dislike the word, veil, or curtain; or, as the Bible puts it, the great gulf. They mean nothing. The best simile is perhaps in the modern invention of the radio.

"A certain set of wave lengths, ethereal vibrations, can impinge themselves upon a corresponding instrument attuned to those vibrations. A slight variation in wave length, and the receiving instrument is a blank, totally unaffected, though it knows that vibrations of tremendous power exist all around it. It must tune in to become receptive to another set of vibrations.

"In something after this manner these discarnate so-called spirit forces are prevented from impinging themselves upon our consciousness. Sometimes we humans, for reasons

of which we are very often unaware, do something, create a condition, which tunes us in with the vibration of a certain group of discarnate forces. Then we become conscious; we establish contact; we, in common parlance, see a ghost."

THE lecturer paused. Vague understanding was apparent on the faces of his fascinated audience.

"Good! Now then—I mentioned elementals. Elementals comprise one of these groups of discarnate forces; possibly the lowest of the group and the least intelligent. They have not evolved to human, or even animal form. They are just—shapes."

"Oh, my God!" The shuddering moan came from Mrs. Jarrett. "The shapes that I have sensed!"

"Exactly. You have sensed such a shape. Why have you sensed it? Because somehow, somewhere, something has happened that has enabled one of these elemental entities to tune in on the vibrations of our human wave length; to break through the veil. What was the cause or how, we have no means of knowing. What we do know about elementals, as has been fully recognized by occultists of the past ages and has been pooh-poohed only by modern materialism, is that they are, to begin with, malignant; that is, hostile to human life. Then again—now mark this well—they can manifest themselves materially to humans only by drawing the necessary force from a human source, preferably from some human in a state of low resistance; from—a sick man."

"Oh, my—my brother?" Mrs. Jarrett gasped her realization.

THE doctor nodded slowly. "Yes, his condition of low resistance and your thoughtless reaching for a contact in your séances have invited this malignant entity to this house. That is why the sick

man has taken this sudden turn for the worse. The elemental is sapping his vitality in order to manifest itself materially. So far you have only felt its malevolent presence. Should it succeed in drawing to itself sufficient force it might be capable of enormous and destructive power. No, no, don't scream now; that doesn't help. You must all get a grip on yourselves so as calmly to take the proper defensive precautions.

"Fortunately we know an antidote; or let me say rather, a deterrent. Like most occult lore, this deterrent has been known and used by all peoples even up to this age of modern skepticism. Savage people throughout the world use it; oriental peoples with a sensitivity keener than our own use it; modern white people use it, though unconsciously. The literature of magic is full of it.

"It is nothing more or less than iron. Cold iron. The iron nose-ring or toe-ring of the savage; the mantra loha of the Hindoos; the lucky horse shoe of your rural neighbors to-day. These things are not ornaments; they are amulets.

"We do not know why cold iron should act as a deterrent to certain kinds of hostile forces—call them spirits, if you like. But it is a fact known of old that a powerful antipathy exists between cold iron and certain of the lower orders of unhuman entities: doppelgangers, churels, incubi, wood runners, leperlings, and so on, and including all forms of elementals.

"SO powerful is this antipathy that these hostile entities cannot approach a person or pass a passage so guarded. There are other forms of deterrents against some of the other discarnate entities: pentagons, Druid circles, etc., and even the holy water of the church. Don't ask me why or how—perhaps

it has something to do with molecular vibrations. Let us be glad, for the present that we know of this deterrent. And let each of you go to bed now with a poker or a stove lid or whatever you fancy as an amulet, which I assure you will be ample to protect a normal healthy person who does not contrive to establish some special line of contact which may counteract the deterrent. In the case of the sick man I have taken the extra precaution of guarding even the door.

"Now the rest of you go to bed and *stay in your rooms*. If you're nervous, you may sleep all in one room. Dr. Terry and I will sit up and prow around a bit. If you hear a noise it will be we doing night watchman. You can sleep in perfect security, unless you commit some piece of astounding foolishness which will open an unguarded avenue of contact. And one more thing: warn your brother, even if he should feel well enough, not in any circumstances to leave his room. Good night; and sleep well—if you can."

HESITANT and unwilling the family went upstairs; huddled together, fearful of every new sound, every old shadow, not knowing how this horror that had come into the house might manifest itself; hating to go, but worn out by fatigue engendered of extreme terror.

"I'll bet they sleep all in one room like sardines," commented the doctor with an attempt at a humor which he was too worried to make genuine. Terry caught the note of anxiety and asked:

"Was that all the straight dope? I mean about elementals and so on? And iron? Sounds kind of foolish."

The doctor's face was sober, the irises of his indeterminate eyes so pale that they were almost invisible in the artificial light.

"You never listened to a less foolish thing, my boy. It sounds so to you only because you have been bred in the school of modern materialism. What? Is it reasonable to maintain that we have during the last thin fringe of years on humanity's history 'obliterated' what has been known to humanity ever since the first anthropoid hid his head under his hairy arms in terror? We have but pushed these things a little farther away; we have become less sensitive than our forefathers. And, having become less sensitive, we naturally do not inadvertently tune in on any other set of vibrations; and so we proclaim loudly that no such things exist. But we are beginning to learn again; and if you have followed the trend you will surely have noticed that many of our leading men of science, of thought, of letters, have admitted their belief in things which science and religion have tried to deny."

TERRY was impressed with the truth of his friend's statement. The possibilities thus opened up made him uneasy.

"Well, er-er, this—this elemental thing," he said uneasily, "can it do anything?"

"It can do"—the indeterminate eyes were far-away pinpoints—"it can do anything, everything. Having once broken into our sphere, our plane, our wave length—call it what you will—its malignant potentiality is measured only by the amount of force it can draw from its human source of supply. And remember—here is the danger of these things—the measure is not on a par ratio. It doesn't mean that such a malignant entity, drawing a few ounces of energy from a sick man, can exert only those few ounces. In some manner which we do not understand, all the discarnate intelligences know how to

step-up an almost infinitesimal amount of human energy to many hundreds per-cent of power; as for instance the 'spirits' that move heavy tables, perform levitation and so on. A malignant spirit can use that power as a deadly, destructive force."

"But, good Lord," burst out Terry, "why should the thing be malignant? Why, if it has broken through, got into tune with human vibrations, why should it want to destroy humans who have never done it any harm?"

The doctor did not reply at once. He was listening, alert and taut.

"Do these people keep a dog, do you know, Jimmy? Would that be it snuffling outside the door?"

BUT the noise, if there had been any, had ceased. The silence was sepulchral. The doctor relaxed and took up the last question.

"Why should it want to destroy life? That's something of a poser. I might say, how do I know? But I have a theory. Remember I said that elementals belonged to one of the least intelligent groups of discarnate entities. Now, the lower one goes in the scale of human intelligence, the more prevalent does one find the superstition that by killing one's enemy one acquires the good qualities of that enemy, his strength or his valor or his speed or something. In the lowest scale we find cannibalism, which is, as so many leading ethnologists have demonstrated, not a taste for human flesh, but a ceremony, a ritual whereby the eater absorbs the strength of the victim. And I suppose you know, incidentally, that militant modern atheists maintain that the holy communion is no other than a symbol of that very prevalent idea. An unintelligent elemental, then—"

The doctor suddenly gripped his

friend's arm. A creak had sounded on the stairs. In the tense silence both men fancied they could detect a soft, sliding scuffle in that direction. With uncontrollable horror Terry's heart came up to his throat. In one panther bound the doctor reached the door and tore it open. Then he swore in baffled irritation.

"Damnation! Pitch dark! Where in thunder are these hall lights?"

THROUGH the open door Terry could hear distinctly scurrying steps on the first landing. In sudden access of horror at being left alone he leaped from his chair to follow his friend, and bumped into him at the door.

Dr. Muncing, cursing his luck in a most plebeian manner, noted his expression and became immediately the scientist again.

"What's this, what's this? This won't do. Scare leaves you vulnerable. Now let me psycho-analyze you and eliminate that. Sit down and get this; it's quite simple and quite necessary before we start out chasing this thing. You feel afraid for two reasons. The first is psychological. Our forebears knew that certain aspects of the supernatural were genuinely fearsome. Unable to differentiate, the superstition grew amongst the laity that all aspects were to be feared, just as most people fear all snakes, though only six per-cent of them are poisonous. You have inherited both fear and superstition. Secondly, in this particular case, you sense the hostility of this thing and its potential power for destruction. Therefore, you are afraid."

Under the doctor's cold logic, his friend was able to regain at least a grip on his emotions. With a rather strained smile he said: "That's pretty thin comfort when even you admit its power for destruction."

"Potential, I said. 'Don't forget, potential,'" urged the doctor. "Its power is capable of becoming enormous. Up to the present it has not been able to absorb very much energy. It evaded us just now instead of attacking us, and we have shut off its source of supply. Remember, too, its manifestation of itself must be physical. It may claw your hair in the dark; perhaps push you over the banisters if it gets a chance; but it can't sear your brain and blast your soul. It has drawn to itself sufficient physical energy to make itself heard; that means to be felt, and possibly to be seen. It has materialized; it cannot suddenly fade through walls and doors."

"To be seen?" said Terry in awe-struck tones. "Good gosh, what does a tangible hate look like?"

THE doctor nodded. "Well put, Jimmy; very well expressed. A tangible hate is just what this thing is. And since it is inherently a formless entity, a shape in the dark, manifesting itself by drawing upon human energy, it will probably look like some gross distortion of human form. Just malignant eyes, maybe; or clutching hands; or perhaps something more complete. Its object will be to skulk about the house seeking for an opening to absorb more energy to itself. Ours must be to rout it out."

Mentally Terry was convinced. He could not fail to be, after that lucid exposition of exactly what they were up against. But physically the fine hair still rose on his spine. Shapeless things that could hate and could lurk in dark corners to trip one up on the stairs were sufficient reason for the very acme of human fear. However he stood up.

"I'm with you," he said shortly. "Go ahead."

The doctor held out his hand.

"Stout fellow. I knew you would, of course; and I brought this along for you as being quite the best weapon for this sort of a job. A blackjack in hand is a strong psychological bracer and it has the virtue of being iron."

Terry took the weighty little thing with a feeling of vast security, which was instantly dispelled by the doctor's next words.

"I suppose," said Terry, "that on account of the iron the thing can't approach one."

"Don't fool yourself," said the other. "Iron is a deterrent. Not an absolute talisman in every case. We are going after this thing; we are *inviting* contact. Well, just as a savage dog may attack a man who is going after it with a club; so our desperate elemental, if it sees a chance, may—well, I don't know what it can do yet. Stick close, that's all."

TOGETHER the two men went up the stairs and stood in the upper hall. Four bedrooms and a bathroom opened off this. Two of the rooms, they knew to be occupied. The other doors stood similarly closed.

"We've got to try the rooms," the doctor whispered. "It probably can, if necessary, open an unlocked door; though I doubt whether it would turn an iron key."

Firmly, without hesitation, he opened one of the doors and stepped into the room. Terry marveled at the action; the man's cold nerve was incredible. The doctor switched on the light. Nothing was to be seen, nothing heard, nothing felt.

"We'd sense it if it were here," said the doctor as coolly as though hunting for nothing more tangible than an odor of escaping gas. "It must be in the other empty room. Come on."

He threw the door of that room wide open and stood, shoulder to

shoulder with Terry, on the threshold. But there was nothing; no sound; no sensation.

"Queer," muttered the doctor. "It came up the stairs. It would hardly go into the bathroom, with an iron tub in it—though, God knows, maybe cast iron molecules don't repel like hand-wrought metal."

The bathroom drew blank. The two men looked at each other, and now Terry was able to grin. This matter of hunting for a presence that evaded them was not nearly so fearsome as his imagination had conjured up. The doctor's eyes narrowed to slits as he stood in thought.

"Another example," he murmured, "of the many truths in the Bible about the occult. Face the devil and he will fly from you, eh? I wonder where the devil this devil can be?"

As though in immediate answer came the rasping sounds of a dry grating cough.

INSTINCTIVELY both men's heads flew round to face the sick man's door. But that remained undisturbed; the patient seemed to be sleeping soundly. Suddenly the doctor gripped his friend's arm and pointed—up to the ceiling.

"From the attic. See that trap-door. It has taken on the cough with the vital energy it has been drawing from the sick man. I guess there'll be no lights up there. I'll go and get my flashlight. You stay here and guard the stairs. Then you can give me a boost up."

The doctor was becoming more incredible every minute.

"You mean to say you propose to stick your head up through there?"

The doctor nodded soberly; his eyes were now black beads.

"It's quite necessary. You see, we've got to chase this thing out of this house while it is still weak, and then protect all entrances.

Then, if it cannot quickly establish a contact with some other sick and non-resistant source of energy it must go back to where it came from. Without a constant replenishment of human energy it can't keep up the human vibrations. That's the importance of shutting it out while it is still too weak to break through anybody else's resistance somewhere else. It's quite simple, isn't it? You sit tight and play cat over the mouse hole. I'll be right up again."

CAT-LIKE himself, the doctor ran down the steps. Terry felt chilled despite the fact that the hall was well lighted and he was armed. But that black square up there—if any cover belonged over it, it had been removed. The hole gaped dark, forbidding; and somewhere beyond it in the misty gloom a formless thing coughed consumptively. Terry, gazing at the hole in fascinated horror, imagined for himself a sudden framing of baleful eyes, a reaching down of a long taloned claw.

It grew to a horror, staring at that black opening, as into an evil world beyond. The effort of concentration became intolerable. Terry felt that he could not for the life of him hold his stare; he had to relieve himself of that tension or he would scream. He felt that cry welling up in his throat and the chill rising of hair on his scalp. He let his eyes drop and took a long breath to recover the control that was slipping from him.

There came a sharp click from the direction of the electric switch, and the hall was in sudden blackness.

Terry stood frozen, the cry choked in his throat. He could not tell how long he remained transfixed. An age passed in motionless fear of he did not know what. What had so diabolically and opportunely turned off the lights?

In the blackness a board creaked with awful deliberation. Terry could not tell where. His faculties refused to register. Only his wretched imagination—or was it his imagination?—conjured up a shadow, darker than the dark, poised on one grotesque foot like some monstrous misshaped carrion bird, watching him with a fell intentness. His pulse hammered at his temples for what seemed an eternity of horror. He computed time later by the fact that his eyes were becoming accustomed to the dim glow that came from the light downstairs.

ANOTHER board creaked, and now Terry felt his knees growing limp. But that was the doctor's firm step on the lower stairs. Terry's knees stiffened and he began to be able to breath once more. In a few seconds the strong comforting presence of that iron-nerved man would be with him and he would be himself again.

The shadow seemed to know that too. Terry was aware of a rush, of a dimly monstrous density of blackness that launched itself at him. He was hurled numbingly against the wall by a muffling air-cushion sort of impact. Helplessly dazed, smothered, he did not know how to resist, to defend himself. He was lost. And then the glutinous pressure recoiled, foiled. He could almost hear the baffled hate that withdrew from him and hurtled down the stairs.

His senses registered the fact that without his own volition he shouted, "Look out!" and that there was a commotion somewhere below. He heard a stamping of feet and a surge of wind as though a window had been blasted open; and the next thing was the doctor's inquiry "Are you hurt?" and the beam of a flashlight racing up the steps.

He was not hurt; miraculously, it seemed to him, for the annihilating malevolence of that formless crea-

ture had appeared to be a vast force. But the doctor dressed him down severely.

"You lost your nerve, you poor sap, in spite of all that I explained to you. You let it influence your mind to fear and so play right into its hands. You laid yourself open to attack as smoothly as though you were Mrs. Jarrett herself. But out of that very evil we can draw the good of exemplary proof.

"**Y**OU were helpless; paralyzed. And yet the thing drew off. Why? Because you had your iron blackjack in your hand. If it had known you had that defense it would never have attacked you, or it would have influenced you to put the iron down first. Knowing now that you have it, it will not, in its present condition of weakness, attack you again. So stick that in your hat and don't get panicky again. But we've got to keep after it. If we can keep it out of the house; if we can continue so to guard the sick man that the thing cannot draw any further energy from him its power to manifest itself must dwindle. We shall starve it out. And the more we can starve it, the less power will it have to break through the resistance of a new victim."

"Come on, then," said Terry.

"Good man," approved the doctor. "Come ahead. It went through the living room window; that was the only one open. But, why, I ask myself. Why did it go out? That was just what we wanted it to do. I wonder whether it is up to some devilish trick. The thing can think with a certain animal cunning. We must shut and lock the living room window and go out at the door. What trick has that thing in store, I wonder? What damnable trick?"

"How are we going to find an abstract hate in this maze of shadows?" Terry wanted to know.

"It is more than abstract," said the doctor seriously. "Having broken into our plane of existence, this thing has achieved, as you have already felt, a certain state of semi-materialization. A ponderable substance has formed round the nucleus of malignant intelligence. As long as it can draw upon human energy from its victim that material substance will remain. In moving from place to place it must make a certain amount of noise. And, drawing its physical energy from this particular sick man, it must cough as he does. In a good light, even in this bright moonlight, it will be to a certain extent visible."

BUT no rustlings and scurryings fled before their flashlights amongst the ornamental evergreens; no furtive shadow flitted across moonlight patches; no sense of hate hung in the darkest corners.

"I hope to God it didn't give us the slip and sneak in again before we got the entries fixed. But no, I'm sure it wasn't in the house. I wish I could guess what tricks it's up to." The doctor was more worried than he cared to let his friend see. He was convinced that leaving the house had been a deliberate move on the thing's part and he wished that he might fathom whatever cunning purpose lay back of that move.

All of a sudden the sound of footsteps impinged upon their ears; faint shuffling. Both men tensed to listen, and they could hear the steps coming nearer. The doctor shook his head.

"It's just some countryman trudging home along the road. If he sees us with flashlights at this hour he'll raise a howl of burglars, no doubt."

The footsteps approached ploddingly behind the fence, one of those nine-foot high ornamental screens made of split chestnut sap-

lings that are so prevalent around many country houses. Presently the dark figure of the man—Terry was quite relieved to see that it was a man—passed before the open gate, and the footsteps trudged on behind the tall barrier.

Fifty feet, a hundred feet; the crunch of heavy nailed boots was growing fainter. Then something rustled amongst the bushes. Terry caught at the doctor's sleeve.

"There! My God! There again!"

A CROUCHING something ran with incredible speed along this side of the fence after the unsuspecting footsteps of the other. In the patches of moonlight between black shadows it was easily distinguishable. It came abreast with the retreating footsteps and suddenly it jumped. Without preparation or take-off, apparently without effort, the swiftly scuttling thing shot itself straight into the air.

Both men saw a ragged-edged form, as that of an incredibly tall and thin man with an abnormally tiny head, clear the nine-foot fence with bony knees drawn high and attenuated ape arms flung wide; an opium eater's nightmare silhouette against the dim sky. And then it was gone.

In the instant that they stood rooted to the spot a shriek of inarticulate terror rose from the road. There was a spurt of flying gravel, a mad plunging of racing footsteps, more shrieks, the last rising to the high-pitched falsetto of the acme of fear. Then a lurching fall and an awful silence.

"Good God!" The doctor was racing for the gate, Terry after him. A hundred feet down the road a dark mass huddled on the ground; there was not a sign of anything else. The misshapen shadow had vanished. The man on the ground rolled limp, giving vent to great

gulping moans. The doctor lifted his shoulders against his own knee.

"Keep a look out, Jimmy," he warned. His deft hands were exploring for a hurt or wound, while his rapid fire of comments gave voice to his findings. "What damned luck! Still, I don't see what it could have done to a sturdy lout like this. How could we have guarded against this sort of a mischance? Though it just couldn't have crashed into this fellow's vitality so suddenly; there doesn't seem to be anything wrong, anyhow. I guess he's more scared than hurt."

THE moaning hulk of a man squirmed and opened his eyes. Feeling himself in the grip of hands, he let out another fearful yell and struggled in a frenzy to escape.

"Easy, brother, easy," the doctor said soothingly. "You're all right. Get a hold of yourself."

The man shuddered convulsively. Words babbled from his sagging lips.

"It-it-its ha-hand! Oh, G-gor—over my face. A h-hand like a eel—a dead ee-eel. Ee-ee!"

He went off into a high-pitched hysteria again.

There was a sound of windows opening up at the house and a confused murmur of anxious voices; then a hail.

"What is it? Who's there? What's the matter?"

"Lord help the fools!" The doctor dropped the man cold in the road and sprang across to the other side from where he could look over the high fence and see the square patches of light from the windows high up on their little hill.

"Back!" he screamed. "Get back! For God's sake, shut those windows!"

He waved his hands and jumped down in an agony of apprehension.

"What?" The fatuous query

floated down to him. "What's that you say?"

Another square of light suddenly sprang out of the looming mass, from the sick man's room. Laboriously the window went up, and the sick man leaned out.

"What?" he asked, and he coughed out into the night.

"God Almighty! Come on, Jimmy! Leave that fool; he's only scared." The doctor shouted and dashed off on the long sprint back to the gate and up the sloping shrubbery to the house that he had thought to leave so well guarded.

"That's its trick," he panted as he ran. "That's why it came out. Please Providence we won't come too late. But it's got the start on us, and it can move ten times as fast."

TOGETHER they burst through the front door, slammed it after them, and thundered up the stairs. The white, owlsh faces of the Jarrett family gleamed palely at them from their door. The doctor cursed them for fools as he dashed past. He tore at the knob of the sick-room door.

The door did not budge.

Frantically he wrestled with it. It held desperately solid.

"Bolted from the inside!" the doctor screamed. "The fool must have done it himself. Open up in there. Quick! Open for your life."

The door remained cold and dead. Only from inside the room came the familiar hacking cough. It came in a choking fit. And then Terry's blood ebbed in a chill wave right down to his feet.

For *there were two coughs*. A ghastly chorus of rasping and retching in a hell's paroxysm.

The doctor ran back the length of the hall. Pushing off from the further wall, he dashed across and crashed his big shoulders against the door. Like petty nails the bolt

screws flew and he staggered in, clutching the sagging door for support.

The room was in heavy darkness. The doctor clawed wildly along the wall for the unfamiliar light switch. Terry, at his heels, felt the wave of malevolence that met them.

THE sudden light revealed to their blinking eyes the sick man, limp, inert, lying where he had been hurled, half in and half out of the bed, twisted in a horrible paroxysm.

The window was open, as the wretched dupe had left it when he poked his foolish head out into the night to inquire about all the hubbub outside. Above the corner of the sill, hanging outside, was a horror that drew both men up short. An abnormally long angle of raggy elbow supported a smudgy, formless, yellow face of incredible evil that grinned malignant triumph out of an absurdly infantile head.

The face dropped out of sight. Only hate, like a tangible thing, pervaded the room. From twenty feet below came back to the trembling men a grating, "och-och-och, ha-ha-ha-heh-heh-heck, och-och." It retreated down the shrubbery.

Dr. Muncing stood a long minute in choked silence. Then bitterly he swore. Slowly, with incisive grimness he spoke a truth:

"Man's ingenuity can guard against everything except the sheer dumb stupidity of man."

IT was morning. Dr. Muncing was taking his leave. He was leaving behind him a few last words of advice. They were not gentle.

"I shall say no more about the criminal stupidity of opening your windows after my warning to you; perhaps the thing was able to influence all of you. Your brother, madam, has paid the price. Through

your fault and his, there is now loose, somewhere in our world, an elemental entity, malignant and having sufficient human energy to continue. Where or how, I cannot say. It may turn up in the next town, it may do so in China; or something may happen to dissipate it.

"As far as you are concerned it is through. It has tapped this source of energy and has gone on. It will not come back, unless you, madam, go out of your way deliberately to attract it by fooling with these silly séances before you have learned a lot more about them than you know now."

Mrs. Jarrett was penitent and very wholesomely frightened, besides. She would never play with fire again, she vowed; she would have nothing at all to do with it ever again; she would be glad if the doctor would take away her ouija board and her planchette and all her note books; everything. She was afraid of them; she felt that some horrible influence still attached to them.

"NOTE BOOKS?" The doctor was interested. "You mean you took notes of the babble that came through? Let me see. Hm-m, the usual stuff; projected reversal of your own conceptions of the hereafter and how happy all your relatives are there. Ha, what's this? Numbers, numbers—twelve, twenty-four, eight—all the bad combina-

tions of numbers. What perversity made you think only of bad numbers? Hello, hello, what— From where did you get this recurring ten, five, eight, one, fourteen? A whole page of it. And here again. And here; eighteen, one, ten? Pages and pages—and a lot of worse ones here? How did this come?"

Mrs. Jarrett was tearful and appeared somewhat hesitant.

"They just came through like that, Doctor. They kept on coming. We just wrote them down."

The doctor was very serious. A thin whistle formed in his pursed lips. His eyes were dark pools of wonder.

"There are more things in heaven and earth—" he muttered. Then shaking off the awe that had come over him, he turned to Mrs. Jarrett.

"My dear lady," he said. "I apologize about those open windows. This thing was able to project its influence from even the other side of the veil. *It made you invite it.* Don't ask me to explain these mysteries. But listen to what you have been playing with." The doctor paused to let his words soak in.

"These numbers, translated into their respective letters, are the beginning of an ancient Hindoo Yogi *spell to invoke a devil.* Merciful heaven, how many things we don't understand. So that's how it came through. And there is no Yogi spell to send it back. We shall probably meet again, that thing and I."

STRANGE TALES

Is Issued Every Other Month



Then in an open place I saw it.

The Dog that Laughed

By Charles Willard Diffin

DOCTOR STROHGER'S experiments were weird, unbelievable, terrifying. They made trouble for me when I first knew of them; trouble enough, I thought at the time. But, could I have looked forward to the night and day of horror that were to come—well, I would not have welcomed the terrifying experience even had I known of the

compensation that would follow.

I was in college, majoring in chemistry, when I first knew "Old Strohger." He was an irascible old codger, peculiar even then, a professor in the medical department, and he used to come over twice a week to give us chemistry students lectures on toxicology and kindred topics.

In appearance, he was tall and

At last Dr. Strohger and his unholy theories are overtaken by Fate—Fate in the form of a dog that laughs.

lean, his scanty gray hair always disordered, his sharp eyes boring into a fellow like a pair of blow-torches; and a wild look of almost maniacal anger would come into them when he was crossed in any way. It was no surprise to us when another year found the name of Professor Strohger quietly dropped from the teaching staff. But before that happened I had learned something more of the doctor.

I didn't know at first why he took a fancy to me. Certainly it was not because of my fondness for Marge Duncan. Marge was his niece. Doctor Strohger had brought her up since her parents had died, and she earned all he had given her, so everyone said. There were just the two of them, and Marge kept his house neat as wax, and did the cooking and housekeeping, all in addition to going to college. Yes, Marge earned her keep and then some, but the old doctor didn't fancy anyone interfering with Marge.

He seemed to like me, though, in spite of my frequent calls. Billy Prentiss and I were the only ones who could call on Marge. Prentiss was a junior medic and his competition didn't worry me. I didn't know we were competing for the job of assistant to Strohger, didn't know we were being sized up as subjects for his devilish experiments.

HE asked me into his laboratory one night—he had a big room fitted up at his house—and it was the look in Marge's eyes that held me back for a moment when I would have followed the doctor from the room.

She was terrified; I could see that plainly. There weren't any good-humored crinkles about her big eyes, nor laughter down deep inside them; there was just fear. And I knew it was fear for me.

Only time for a whisper: "Don't let him, Jimmy—don't let him hypnotize you!" And the doctor's head poked back through the door to say irritably: "Well, young man, if you're coming, come!"

I went. But I gave Marge's hand a reassuring squeeze, and I was wondering—wondering about the doctor.

Strohger—R. L. Strohger, M.D.—was a toxicologist, and yet Marge had said "hypnotism" and she was warning me against him. What had Strohger to do with hypnotism? . . . I was doing some plain and fancy thinking as I went into the laboratory.

"I thought you would be interested, Blaine," he told me, and motioned me to a chair. "You are different from the usual run of students; you think for yourself. Sit down; I want to talk with you. And I may allow you to work with me in some research. You wouldn't mind picking up a little extra income, would you?"

Strohger knew that I was alone in the world and that I was working my way through college. "A little extra income!" That sounded good to me, and I told him so.

"Fine," he said; "I can use an assistant."

"Toxicology?" I asked, and grinned. "Don't want to experiment on me, do you?"

Smiles did not come easy to the hard, tight-lipped face of the doctor, but he managed one. "Yes, I may want you to lend yourself to an experiment or two, Blaine—but not toxicology. No, no. Nothing dangerous. Psychiatry—that is my hobby, my real work."

HE crossed the room and opened a door. The smell of animals came to me, and I saw boxes and cages through the doorway. I was suddenly interested. Psychiatry! The study of the mental states of

which so little is known. . . . But the thought of working with Dr. Strohger was not so attractive, though it would mean seeing more of Marge. I got one glimpse of Strohger as he came back; there was a dog struggling in his arms, and the look on the man's face was vindictive and cruel.

He snapped some shackles upon the animal's legs and had it helpless in a moment; then he stroked it and made passes from its head, and the dog lay still. He opened the side of a metal case and put the dog inside.

I had been looking about; I had wondered about the big metal box with its connected apparatus: a maze of wiring, a Coolidge tube, other powerful lights with shutters and screens. Some of the apparatus about the room was familiar, but most of it was new to me, and appeared to have been made by the doctor himself.

"I will show you something," he told me. "I know that I need not define psychiatry for you; you are intelligent; but you will be amazed at my findings. I have learned—much."

His fingers were touching here and there about the complication of coils and switches. A light blazed dazzlingly to vanish as he dropped a slide before it. The tubes were sputtering and glowing.

"An animal subject," the doctor was saying, "is not capable of giving the best results, but"—he paused to look through an eyepiece into the big case where the dog had been placed—"but look for yourself." He motioned me to the peep-hole of glass or quartz.

MY eyes found nothing when first I looked, nothing but darkness. "I can't see a thing," I told him; "it's absolutely dark."

"Quite the contrary," was his amazing reply; "the cabinet is

flooded with light—dark light! Your eyes do not see it. It is a combination of both ultra-violet and infra-red, with some other radiations of my own devising."

I heard his sardonic chuckle behind me as I continued to stare, and abruptly I knew there was light in the cabinet.

Faint at first, it gathered slowly, a whirling mist of luminous vapor. In the utter darkness of the cabinet it shone with increasing brilliance, and now, by its light, I could see the body of the dog lying quiet, apparently dead, on the floor. But the vapor—!

It was quivering now with a tremulous vibration that told of infinite, finer vibrations within it. And, as I watched, the vapor slowly assumed the form of a *dog*. It was a thing of shimmering light, but, nevertheless, a dog, *the dog*, the very animal I could see upon the floor. A thread of violet light connected the phantom figure with the real body. The luminous thing became firm and substantial, and lost its translucence. It was a dog, a living, breathing animal, and it looked at me with a devilish hatred in its eyes that sent chills of fear to grip and quiver in my spine. Never, in eyes human or animal, have I seen such implacable, ferocious hatred as this thing was directing at my eyes.

I DREW back in apprehension, then pressed my face against the glass to stare the harder where another figure was showing. Dim, this one, and hazy, but presently I made out the bent figure of a man. There was no hatred in those eyes that gleamed pale in a pallid face. Only an imploring look; agonized, beseeching! And in that instant I recognized the face. And from this form, too, I saw a thread of violet light, that wavered to end in nothingness.

The face vanished, and the hand of Dr. Strohger pulled me away, while he asked: "It formed, did it not? The projected thought image of the dog!" He nodded with satisfaction at what he saw—the other face with its agonized eyes was gone—and the doctor switched off the instrument and motioned me again to my chair. I found it in a daze.

"What was it?" I managed to gasp; "what were they?"

"They?" The question was sharp; the tone cut through my blurred thoughts to warn me. I would say nothing of the second form.

"Two dogs," I offered in lame explanation; "one on the floor and the other—that ugly, beastly thing!" The shudder that accompanied my exclamation was not assumed.

"That," said Dr. Strohger, complacently enough, "was the projected personality of the animal on the floor—or a part of it, to be precise. Animals, like humans, may have split personalities. And now let me explain. I did not mean to startle you; I could not foresee that it would be the ugly part of it that would show."

I didn't know much then of what he was saying; I wasn't in the best of condition for grasping his explanation, but I got something of "dual personalities—more than two at times—all in the one person—separate them—project them into the vibratory zone where they are visible—actual entities—"

I BROKE in after a while to ask: "You can do this to people? And what is the idea of it all?"

"Yes, much better with a human subject," he told me; "and as to the object, we can learn to be of help to them, to straighten out their mental twists and obsessions, to liberate them from the internal conflict of opposing personalities."

I was watching his eyes that did not look at me as he offered this explanation. I have always been sensitive to facial expressions, and I saw a flicker of the eyes that made a lie of his words. I remembered his ugly look when bringing in the dog and I could see little of benefit to the subject who placed himself at Dr. Strohger's mercy.

"I would like to see the experiment," I told him.

"You shall," he assured me. "But now, how about yourself? Would you care to work with me on this?"

"As a subject?" I asked.

"Why, yes, at times; there is nothing unpleasant about it. Perhaps I may use a little hypnotism, with your consent, to break down the barriers of the conscious and reach what lies below. You would enjoy the experience. I could use you regularly—two or three times a week. And I will make it well worth your while."

He believed I was considering the proposal, and he smiled upon me in what he thought was the friendliest way.

"Sounds interesting," I said; "but can't you show me such a test—on someone else. How about the old man you have around here—Wilkins, isn't it?—I've seen him at your gardening. Can't we try it out on him?"

I had tried to make my voice casual, and I avoided meeting the sharp eyes that were boring into mine now. Then he covered that betraying look and answered.

"Impossible, I'm afraid. Wilkins was my best subject, but he died last week, poor old chap,"—the sympathy he was forcing into his voice made me writhe—"died of heart failure. I thought you knew."

"No, I didn't know," I said, "but I do now."

"Who signed the death certificate?" I asked, and looked squarely at him this time.

I WILL say this for the doctor: he never by so much as the twitch of a muscle betrayed what was going on behind those piercing eyes. He just hesitated a moment as he rose, and I set myself for an attack. Then he walked quietly to the door and opened it.

"You will leave this house," he said, "at once. And if you ever come back—"

"It will be with an officer," I told him, "and a warrant."

I was white hot with rage at the thought of being thrown out almost bodily like that! But through all my emotions and the wild thoughts of a youngster there shone clearly a face. It was dim and unreal, but the eyes were searching, imploring; and the face was that of old Wilkins who had died—of heart failure!

What was it? A vision? A phantom? A living entity projected by the damnable mechanism of Dr. Strohger from the mind of that old man, reforming again in the zone of vibration to cry out for its body, severed by death? I have never answered the question. But that Strohger had killed him I had not the least doubt. The look in the eyes, the pleading look, I could not forget. The horror of it stayed with me for many a night.

After that, of course, I saw little of Marge. She was ordered never to see me nor speak to me again. She disobeyed the order once, long enough to tell me of it and to show me that she must obey. And I made myself plain to her. I was poor; this last year of college must be finished; then work and success would let me come for her. The answering look in her deep brown eyes struck mere words to futile silence.

SOON after that, the name of Professor Strohger was dropped from the faculty list. Strohger vanished, and with him, Marge. Bill

Prentiss left, too. I learned this later, but the events were not connected in my mind.

Two years, with never a word, and only the memory of the message of Marge's eyes. I never lost faith, and I still clung to hope, but I knew Marge was a prisoner of her uncle—and the two years were not pleasant.

One year of college and one in the laboratories of a steel mill were enough for me; the deadly routine procedure was stifling, and I struck out for myself. Norwalk had an opening, I believed; it was a secluded little town that was enjoying a boom and there were industries of various sorts locating there. There would be work for a free-lance chemist.

But there was another and more compelling reason why I had selected Norwalk. I had received a message—well, you could hardly call it that—but it was a postcard. It was addressed to me at the University, marked "Class of 1926," and the registrar had forwarded it.

There was just the address, and on the other side only one word: "Jimmy." Nothing else, but the unmistakable handwriting of Marge Duncan made my breath catch and choke me. I surmised that she had no chance to write more; and the card was marked with mud stains.

Someone had probably found it, and had mailed it despite the lacking message; and the postmark, though blurred, I felt sure, was "Norwalk."

I made inquiries, you may be sure; pestered the postmaster and the R.F.D. carriers, and the storekeepers too, but not a soul could I find who had heard the name Strohger, or knew of a household that answered the description. I couldn't find a lead. And that unfinished message—it was a call for help; I knew that Marge needed me.

EXCEPT for my work I would have worn myself out with worry, but I had made no mistake in the location. I got more work than I could handle and had to hire an assistant for the routine analyses. That forced me to keep myself busy until five o'clock every day. Then I would take my little roadster and just cruise around. I covered every road and lane for miles about; it got so that I knew every rock and bump in the roads.

And every house! I sized them all up, looked, and wondered, as I looked, if this could be the place where Marge was waiting. I was almost sick with worry and too much work with not enough sleep—but I found the place.

There was a little cross-roads village, miles back from the railroad, and a lonely road that led off over the hills. Why anyone had ever built a big house back there, on that road, was a puzzle. But there it was, one of those old-time mansions of brick with a gambrel roof and long windows with heavy old-fashioned shutters; the whole thing was set back from the road in a big fenced yard that had been pretentious in its day. It was a tangle now of shrubbery, grown rank and tall grass, with a neglected driveway curving through. It gave me the shivers; it was so like a corpse, a mummy of what had been a home.

It was the dog that stopped me. He came out of the driveway and stood square in the center of the narrow road. He was a big police dog—the biggest brute I had ever seen, I thought—and he just stood and looked at me, looked straight at my eyes.

I stopped the car. The dog was like a gray statue; it wouldn't move, and I hadn't room to pass on either side. It was all uncanny, this seemingly deserted house, the death-like stillness in the air, the growing darkness, and that big beast that

walked silently out of the half open gate to stare and stare, with a fierce intensity in its unwinking eyes. Partly my nerves, I suppose, but I seemed to get something from him that sent a tingle of apprehension that was half expectation quivering along my spine.

Then a whistle! It came from the house. And the dog's head dropped. He stood without moving for a moment till the whistle came again, sharp and commanding. It was pitiful to see the poor beast grovel. Head and tail down, he slunk back to the gate.

SOMEONE had come out of the door to stand on the little brick porch; someone tall and thin, and the wind was blowing his scanty, unkempt gray hair. I never bothered to open the door of the roadster; I went over the side and followed the dog. There's wasn't much light, but I couldn't be wrong. I had too vivid a memory of the man to mistake him now, and I followed the cringing big beast where Doctor Strohger was waiting.

He didn't speak at first, and neither did I. We just stood there looking at each other. Taller than ever he seemed, and thinner, but there was no sign of weakness in him. He was all tense muscle and hatred as he glared at me as if about to spring; his eyes were more deep-sunk than ever, and the look in them wasn't welcoming, to put it mildly.

"I warned you once," he said, very quietly; "I told you not to come back."

I didn't bother with that. "Where's Marge?" I demanded. Things got a little blurry then; I was seeing red. And I wanted nothing better than to get my hands on that damned devilish face and beat it to a pulp. "Where is she?" I asked. "I mean business."

He just laughed. "She isn't here," he said.

"That's a lie."

And still he laughed—or snarled—it was hard to tell which; but he made no answer.

"I'm here to get her," I told him; "I'm coming in."

He glanced once at the big dog that had slunk in behind him; he seemed to be considering something, I thought. I was ready to beat his head off that minute and break into the house.

"Marge," he told me finally, "is married. She married Prentiss. You remember Billy Prentiss in the medical department. She is not here. They are living out west."

"Another lie! Don't you ever speak the truth?" I was cold-mad by that time, but my heart was just a chunk of lead. It might be true, there was no telling what this devil had done.

"I'm coming in," I told him; "I'll see for myself."

"Billy would tear your throat out if I told him to," he said, and pointed to the dog. The beast crouched down behind him, the hackles on his neck stood up and his eyes were red in the half light. Here was something to reckon with. I hardly heard the cackling laugh of the doctor as he added, "I call him Billy; he's named for her husband." And he cackled again—a nasty sound.

THEN he seemed to change his mind. "Get back," he told the dog, "into the house!" And to me: "Come right in, Mr. James Blaine; you honor me with your insistence." Surprisingly, he threw the door open, and I followed him into a hallway.

There was a lamp burning in a bracket on the wall, and another in the big room adjoining the one he led me into. There was no modern lighting system in this old house,

just oil lamps. It made the big room a place of dancing shadows, but I saw enough to recognize the laboratory equipment and the big contrivance with its lights and tubes that I had seen before. Strohger's damnable experiments, I thought. He had been continuing them here.

He read my thoughts. "Yes," he said; "the same line of research. Most interesting work—very! Though it is not so convenient in some ways. I make my own current for my machine—a gas engine and storage batteries that work very well."

"Not interested!" I told him. "You were lying out there. Where's Marge?"

He didn't answer, but just sat there and stared at me. The light shone in his eyes, and I remember they reminded me of the dog's; they blazed in their sockets, they fascinated me. That steady stare! It bothered me—confused me.

Then: "It was the truth," he said slowly in a low, steady tone. "I will prove it to you, and you will believe me—you will listen to me. . . . You will listen . . . you will listen to me,"—his voice seemed coming from far off—"you—will—listen . . . you—will—believe—me. . . ."

I remember how quiet the room was, how my wild, storming rage seemed melting away. And Strohger moved softly in the dim light to touch his fingers here and there about the apparatus in the corner. Big enough for a dog, I was thinking; big enough for Billy, huge as he was—big enough for a man!

"Look in here," Strohger was telling me quietly. "I have progressed with my experiments; I will show you Marge, or rather, her thought projection. Watch here as you did before; watch carefully."

Against my will, I peered into the big metal box.

THE inside of the cabinet was dark—a darkness that was utter black—until a trickle of light came to life. It glowed brighter, not brilliant, until just a soft glowing light was vaguely outlined. Then that hardened to a sharp, shining point that held my eyes, and my eyes followed it; it held them and drew me after, while it faded off and off into a tremendous distance. . . . A voice was speaking to me, and it seemed to be coming from the light. "Sleep," I was being told; "sleep . . . sleep. . . ."

My nerves were all that saved me. I was keyed up; tuned like a string on a violin, it seemed—and the string snapped. I came to in an instant, and in the same instant I turned and swung at the thing there behind me. It wasn't a man, it wasn't Strohger that I aimed the blow at. It was just something devilish, hateful, beastly, in the form of the doctor. And my blow, if it had connected, would have laid him out cold.

But he knew it was coming—knew it the instant that I did—and he warded it off. There was no chance for another.

"Billy!" he screamed. "At him, Billy. Kill him!" And right there I lost track of the doctor. The big brute was right on me, but I didn't go down. I smashed one fist to the head that shot up at my face. He leaped again as I backed through the door, and the big teeth clicked as they missed my throat by an inch.

There was a chair beside me in the hall. It was heavy; I wouldn't have swung it so easily under ordinary conditions. But I'm no light weight myself, and I had more than human strength right then. I needed it. I met the dog's leap in mid-air, and the chair went to pieces in my hand.

I was in my car and tramping on the starter when the beast came

after me down the driveway. The doctor was behind him, and I didn't wait for any more. I switched on my lights and took off into the night as fast as I could shift the gears.

I was shaken, I'll admit it, and shaken by what the doctor had said as much as by what he had done. Marge married to Billy Prentiss! I couldn't believe it. I wouldn't!

A MILE or so away was a house—the nearest neighbor, too. I stopped short of that and turned around. I didn't want to meet anyone or see anyone; I just wanted to get back to that spooky old mansion and see what could be learned. I parked the car out of hearing, too, and went the rest of the way on foot.

The house looked twice as big and twice as lonesome when I crept toward it and went over the iron fence. I had found a stout club for a weapon in case the police dog was out, but there was neither sign nor sound of him as I crouched listening in the black darkness.

There wasn't much moon, and it was behind me shining on the near side of the house when the scud of clouds let it break through.

What was I looking for? I couldn't have told, I just wanted to learn more of the place and of what it might hold; and I wanted desperately some word of Marge.

The good night odors of the country came to me; the peaceful quiet that only the country knows; and the rasp of crickets and the countless tiny sounds that make the silence of night so noisy when you really listen. And I was listening. I heard the sounds, and I heard when they stopped. There was something moving under the trees, moving toward me. There was not a whisper of warning from whatever it was; it was the silence of the crickets that marked its coming.

THEN in an open place I saw it—a thing like an ape that shambled awkwardly, but in utter silence, through the dark. It moved clumsily on all fours, grotesquely, and I saw only a vague white shape, as it stopped to come up on its hind legs and sniff at the air.

A twig cracked, off at one side; there was something else. That made two of them now, though I didn't even glimpse the one that had made the noise. I merely gripped my club and waited.

Before the house was open ground which had probably been a lawn at one time, and across the open space was a big tree. The leaves were thick, and consequently I hadn't seen anything up there; but suddenly I saw something black drop from a branch. It landed in a heap, then scrambled to its feet, and I thought it was another ape-thing—a black one this time—till the moon broke through to show the tall figure and blowing, frowzy hair of Doctor Strohger. And how that man ran! He made the front porch and grabbed for the door, and the things that had stalked me broke crashingly from their concealment to give chase. The big dog almost made it. It was the dog that I had heard, near me.

"Down, Billy, down!" the doctor was screaming, and the voice was like your own that you hear in some horrible dream when you are trying to escape. But the dog never stopped, and the door was slammed just as he crashed against it. Behind him the white thing that had followed more slowly was slinking into the dark. The moon was gone behind the clouds, and I was mighty glad to scramble over the fence and put its iron bars between me and those nightmare things.

But I was puzzled. Doctor Strohger, treed! Only the fact that the beasts below him had come snuffing after me had allowed him to run

for it. The ape-thing was too much for me, and I passed that problem up. But the dog! It was the same brute that had tried to kill me at the doctor's order. And now he was apparently as eager to get his teeth into his master's throat.

HIS master? . . . And then I understood. The doctor was no longer in command of these creatures; whatever hold the man had had over these brutes was broken. Something had slipped, and he was a prisoner in his own house. The slamming of shutters confirmed my belief. One after another, as fast as the man inside could race from one window to the next, the shutters were slammed shut, and the windows of the whole ground floor were made fast against attack. And the ghastliest thing of all was to see the dog: he was trying to break in.

I saw him come up on his hind legs to claw and scratch at the shutters; I could see the white marks where he tore the wood. He was as tall as a man, but the windows were high, and he worked as a man might work to force his paws beneath the tight slats. But he couldn't make it; they held fast; and then I saw him pacing back and forth across the open ground in front. The white thing, in the meantime, kept back under the trees—the beasts had forgotten me, it seemed—and they only growled and snarled at one another from time to time.

A waking nightmare of sheer horror! I actually gripped hard at my own arm to assure myself that I was there in the flesh and was seeing the things my eyes said were there. And I would have made a nice little bet that nothing could take me inside that fence again—but I would have lost.

I was screened from the open space before the front of the house, but what moon there was must

have made me plainly visible from the side, and I knew after a bit there was something moving there. The lower windows on that side were all sealed fast with their black shutters, and one window on the second floor was the same. I remembered it had been that way before. But now the little movable slats of those upper shutters were opened, and something white, like a ribbon, was being lowered and swung from side to side.

THE doctor was signalling me. That was my first thought, until I knew better. And I didn't breathe for a minute or so when I realized what it really meant. It was Marge, locked up there, and she was lowering something where I could see.

The fence couldn't keep me out then, but I crept as silently as the animals to a distant point where I could go over the top of the sharp iron pickets and work up toward the house.

I reached for the ribbon and tugged on it, and my hand closed on something that sparkled at the end of the white cord. Enamel and gold, it was, when I looked at it, with Greek letters and some little diamonds set about. My own fraternity pin I had given Marge so long ago!

I couldn't keep still. "Marge!" I called softly. "Marge, my dear!"

There was a commotion up there behind the blinds and the cackling laughter of old Doctor Strohger. "They'll kill him," I heard him say. And then Marge screamed.

"Run, Jimmy!" she told me. "They are out; they will kill you!"

I had my club, and I stood there long enough to answer. "I'm coming in," I said; "I'll save you." But she pounded at the shutters and then calmed her voice to speak distinctly.

"No, no! I am safe here; I am safe, Jimmy. Go quickly, dear, but come back." I didn't have time to

hear any more. A white thing was leaping through the tangle of bushes, and the dog was a swift black shadow that kept pace with it.

The white ape beat me to it; it was between me and the fence, crouched animal-like for a spring. It was growling and snarling, and I was rigid with horror as the moon flashed out to show me the thing that was springing at me. I heard animal snarls, but they came from human lips in the face of a man, a distorted twisted face. It would have got me, for I couldn't move when the figure of that naked, open-jawed man leaped like an animal for my throat. I felt the brush of stiff hair as a black body went past; and I saw the big dog for an instant as it met the man in mid-air to go crashing back in a fighting, snarling whirl where the bushes hid them—all but the beastly, inhuman noise.

Then I ran, and I never quit till I reached the car where I had left it.

IT was noon when I awoke. Who would think that a man could sleep after an hour like that? I hardly knew how I drove home; I went to my room, and threw myself on the bed. I was completely exhausted, and I wanted to think. But all I could know was that I had found Marge, and she was safe for the present. I guess it was that that let me forget the horrors.

I rushed to my office as soon as I knew where I was; there was a gun in the desk, and I was going to need it.

"The coroner's been looking for you," my assistant told me. "He's been in a dozen times in the past two hours."

"To-morrow," I said; "I'll see him to-morrow," and I jammed the pistol in my pocket; I had other business that day. But the coroner caught me as I was leaving.

He wouldn't listen to my protests. "I've got to see you right now," he told me, and stuck a bottle into my hand.

"Nothing doing," I tried to explain. I liked old Doc Powell, lean, weather-beaten old fellow, with the marks of forty years of sun and storm from his rounds as a general practitioner through all these hills. I had run a few analyses for him—blood-count and such as that—but I wasn't waiting now.

And I couldn't explain. I had thought of getting help—going for the sheriff or someone like that—but that wouldn't do. They would have locked me up as insane with what I would have told them. And I couldn't get a search-warrant on the strength of a wild tale and a fraternity pin. No, I would have to see it through alone, and the less publicity the better for Marge, without a doubt.

"I can't do it," I told the coroner; "I've got to go."

"You will do it. There's a man been killed, or so I reckon."

He had me by the arm. "Where are you off to in such an all-fired hurry, son?" he asked.

I didn't know what to say, so I told the truth. "Hale's Corners," I told him; "or out beyond."

"Not the old Steadman road?" he asked.

I had seen the name on a battered sign. I nodded to him and tried to break away, but he hung on.

"**N**OTHING out there," he said, eyeing me; "nothing but the old Steadman place. Going there? To that old place that sets back from the road, and looks kinda gone to seed?"

"What of it?" I was getting mad now. I was wild to get back there, and Marge was waiting. "Doctor Strohger lives there," I said; "I've got to see him."

"He hasn't gone by that name,"

said the coroner. "Now set!" he commanded and pushed me into a chair. "You ain't in such a rush as you think. That's where the body was found."

A body! Marge! I had a bad minute or two; then I remembered what he had said: that it was the body of a man.

"A naked body," said the coroner slowly, "and it had been chewed up some, too. But that wasn't what killed the man and dropped him out there in the road. When I see a back-bone twisted like its two ends are trying to meet, it means just one thing. Now you test this from his stomach, and test it for strychnine. Then we'll see about your errand out there, Mr. Blaine."

I made a qualitative for him. Lord knows how I found the right reagents, but the color flashed up in the solution, and there wasn't a doubt what it meant.

"Strychnine," I told him; "and enough to kill a horse."

I saw it all like a flash: the white ape-man and the dog; and the man had got it. "It was an accident," I said; "it wasn't meant for him."

The doctor sat up straight in his chair, and he aimed a finger at me as if it was the pistol in my pocket.

"Accident!" he said. "Accident! Yes, there are places where strychnine goes as an accident, and cyanide, and shooting, too. But not in this county, young man; not while I'm the coroner."

He motioned me to a chair. "I like you, Blaine," he told me, "I like you first rate. And I think you're all right in this matter; but you've got some explaining to do. Set right there and tell me all you know."

IT was a relief to have someone to tell it to. And then I went with the doctor down to the under-

taker's where the body had been brought.

I remembered the wild animal that had leaped for me in the night—a beast in the shape of a man; I was looking for that. I never expected to look at the face, calm and peaceful now, of Bill Prentiss. But there he was, changed somewhat. There were lines in his face that hadn't been there before, but it was Prentiss—Billy Prentiss—and I knew now it was this that had sprung murderously at my throat.

And the dog had saved me; I had hardly thought of that, but I wondered at it now. The dog! It had tried to kill me before when Strohger controlled it. And then, freed from that control, it had saved me from Prentiss, or the man-beast that he had been back there in the dark.

"It's too much for me," I told the coroner. "I get the straight of some of it—not much, but some—but I know this: Marge Duncan is out there, and she's in danger. I'm going, and I'm going now."

"You bet we are," said the coroner, and he beat me to his car. He got a pistol from a pocket in the car-door, I noticed, and put it on his hip. I patted my own pocket, and he nodded.

NOT a sign of life about the big house as we drove up. Just the warm sun beating down on everything, and the smell of hot grass, and cicadas sawing away at their summer song. It didn't seem possible that the nightmare story I had told could ever have been true. The coroner must have felt it, too, for he looked at me curiously as we drove up. But I pointed to a strip of white ribbon hanging and blowing gently below a shuttered window, and his look changed.

There was no white ape-thing in the tangled briars—that was only a twisted body now in the under-

taker's rooms—nor was there any sign of the dog. We went past the shuttered windows and onto the porch to knock loudly on the door.

It wasn't until I shouted that the door opened a crack, and the face of Doctor Strohger showed in the opening. He was ready to slam the door shut, but his face lost its look of terror when he saw us.

"This is Doctor Powell, the coroner," I said; "we've come to talk to you. Open that door."

The eyes narrowed a bit I thought, but Doctor Strohger was almost courteous as he let us in. He bolted the door though when he closed it.

"Right in here," he said, and led the way to the room I had seen the day previous, "and then perhaps you will tell me why I have the honor of this professional call."

It was in there. The hall lamp was not lighted, and the shuttered windows made the place a vault; there was lamp-light from the inner room, though. I waited just a minute. I had heard the rattle of the engine in the coroner's old car, and it was in my mind to go back and shut it off. It was an involuntary action. I slid the bolt and started to open the door; then I changed my mind and went toward the lighted room.

IT didn't take long for the coroner to state his case.

"He was found near here," he told Strohger at last; "just down the road a piece, and I understand that the man was staying with you. Mr. Blaine is authority for the statement that there was strychnine in his stomach. I say he died of it."

Doctor Strohger leaned back comfortably in his chair and made clucking sounds with his tongue. "Too bad," he said; "most unfortunate, and nobody in the least to blame. Yes, I put out the poisoned

meat, but I meant it for the dog. And it was Prentiss who ate it. Yes, yes!"

"What in the devil have you been doing?" demanded the coroner. "What kind of witch's brew do you concoct to make men and animals act like this?"

Doctor Strohger waved a deprecatory hand. "Witchcraft?" he said. "Oh, no, my dear Doctor! Nothing like that. You are familiar, I assume, with some of the findings of the modern psychologists. You doubtless keep up with your reading along psychiatric lines, and you will understand something of my experiments. I have been doing some research work, as our young friend knows"—he bowed toward me with a look of malice flitting across his face—"research into the subliminal mental states. I have been working with animals. Young Prentiss was my assistant.

"That Prentiss attacked this young man, Blaine, I have my doubt; Prentiss was an exceptionally capable assistant. But I had the dog under hypnosis—I had held him there for some months in fact—and I had left him in Prentiss' care. He allowed the dog to escape, that is all. And though I knew Prentiss was outside there trying to rectify his error and recapture the dog, I felt doubtful of his success and I thought it best to attempt to poison the beast. Why Prentiss touched it is more than I can explain."

"Perhaps Marge Duncan can help us to understand," I said, and I got to my feet. "Now you take me to Marge, you lying devil, and if anything's happened to her—" The expression on my face would have finished the sentence, but Doctor Strohger was not looking at me or hearing what I said. He was half out of his chair, tense and listening. Then I heard it, too—the soft pad of animal feet in the hall.

"You left that door open!" The words of Strohger were a scream. "You damned, blundering—" He had leaped to slam the door into the hall. There was another that opened into a passage to a staircase. And Doctor Strohger, while for an instant we stood petrified, made a wild leap from the room, and his feet were pounding on the stairs.

A SCRAMBLING clatter echoed from the room beyond—claws ripping at a board floor—as an animal stopped its wild rush where it had circled through an adjoining room. I saw it before me; it tore at the flooring in frantic haste. It was the big gray-bodied police dog, and it bounded in tremendous leaps up the stairs, where Doctor Strohger was battering at a closed door.

I made the stairs in about three jumps myself, and my gun was in my hand; the coroner, I knew, was behind me. I saw the door open to let the tall form of Strohger crowd through, and I saw the final spring that carried a gray body in upon him.

Marge's screams were in my ears as I followed. I saw her dimly for an instant, flattened against the wall, and in that whirling moment I knew that she was safe. Then I saw what was happening on the floor. And as fast as I could pull the trigger I fired at the gray mass that was tearing with dripping fangs at the throat of a screaming, struggling man.

It was the coroner who smashed open the shutters to let sunshine in upon the scene of blood and horror. And it was the coroner who was first at the side of the mangled man. I was busy supporting a white-faced girl who clung to me in terror that was a culmination of two years' experience.

Marge Duncan! I didn't know how much I loved her till I held

her safe and close. And through all the frenzy of that moment there was just one thought uppermost in my mind. I had to know.

"Marge," I asked, "did you—were you and Billy married?"

The look in her eyes was enough; I held her tighter. "It was your uncle who said it," I told her; "I never believed—"

THE coroner was kneeling beside Strohger; his quick fingers were pressing a handkerchief into the center of the spurting blood, but he caught my eye and shook his head to show that it was hopeless. "The dog has done justice," he said gravely; "this man will never live to hang for the man he killed."

Doctor Strohger was breathing, a noisy, horrible breath; he was dying there before us, but he managed to speak from that mangled throat, to speak in a whisper that gasped and bubbled hideously:

"I never—killed him. It was—only—the dog—that I killed." He raised a shaking hand that pointed at me, and he cackled that damnable laugh of his. "Blaine—killed Prentiss—killed him—just now—"

We looked at each other in amazement, the coroner and I. It

was Marge who gave us the answer.

"He—he changed them," she whispered, "changed them about." I felt her trembling against me. "He's been working on them for months. He locked me up here when I said that I would tell. He split their personalities, he told me; liberated the dominant self of each, and he put the mind—the soul—of Prentiss into that dog and the dog's mind into the man."

I looked at Strohger. His eyes that gleamed fiercely through the very veil of death gave dreadful confirmation to the truth, and he added in that ghastly whisper: "Interesting—very!" But it was the dog who supplied the last unspoken words.

He had been lying there—dog or Prentiss!—God knows what. I had thought he was dead. But he raised his head with a final effort to look squarely into the face of Doctor Strohger. The animal lips curled back and up in a beastly grin; there were sounds that came choking from his throat.

No, I know that a dog can't laugh—but this one did. It looked straight into the shrinking face of the mangled, dying man, and it laughed and laughed, horribly, until the end.

Death Tokens

MANY are the superstitions and tokens connected with death, and the melancholy minds of many of the old-time inhabitants of the west of England recognized their full share.

It was at one time generally believed in that region that death could be retarded, and the dying kept in a state of suffering, by closing the locks and shooting the bolts in the dwelling of the dying person.

It was believed that a man could not die easily on a bed made of fowls' feathers, or the feathers of wild birds.

It was very bad luck to carry a corpse to church by a new road.

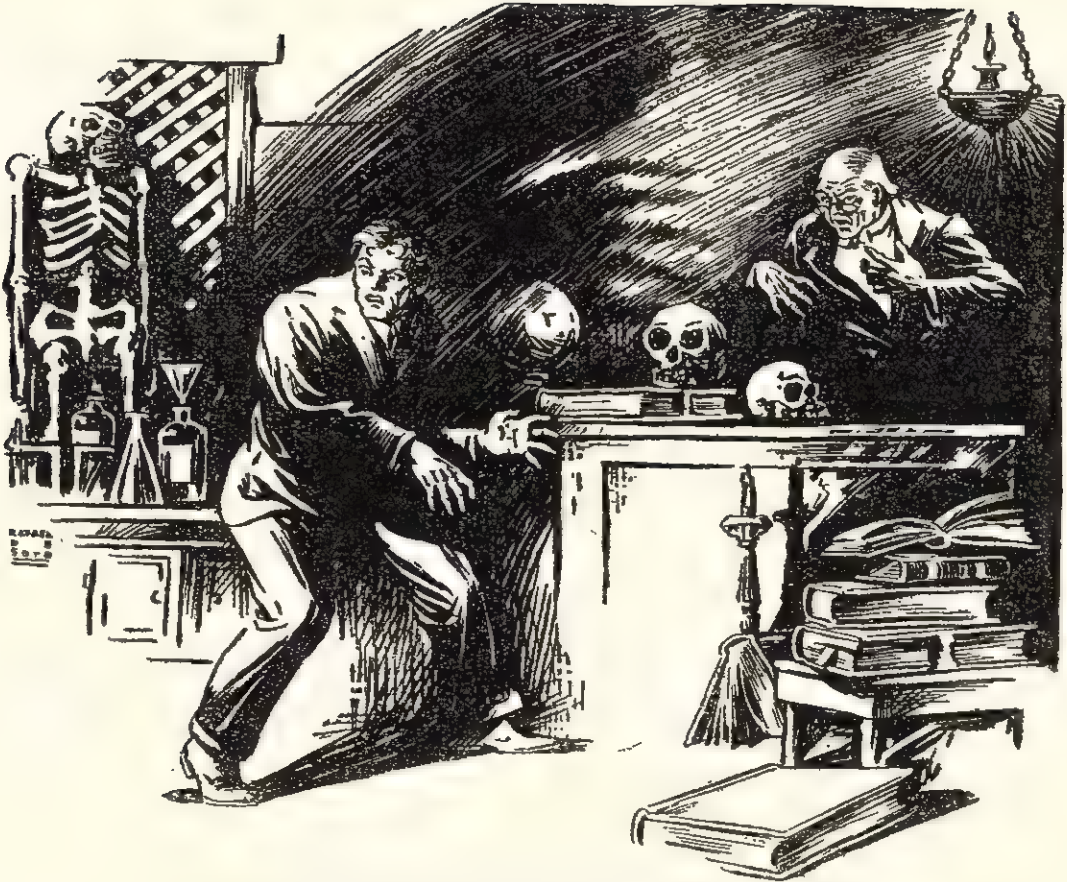
Whenever a guttering candle folded over its cooling grease it used to be watched with much anxiety. If it curled upon itself it was said to form the "handle

of a coffin," and the person toward whom it was directed was said to be in danger of death.

When a cock crowed at midnight, the angel of death was passing over the house; and if he delayed striking, the respite was for but a short time. He was bound to return soon.

The howling of a dog was a sad sign. If repeated for three nights, the house against which it howled was sure to be soon in mourning.

According to the shapes of the small chips of coal thrown off in fireplaces depended the significances of several omens. When they were round, a purse of money could be expected; when oblong, a coffin was indicated, and the danger would exist for the person towards whom it flew.



At last I heard that peculiar slithering in the hall.

The Return of the Sorcerer

By Clark Ashton Smith

I HAD been out of work for several months, and my savings were perilously near the vanishing point. Therefore I was naturally elated when I received from John Carnby a favorable answer inviting me to present my qualifications in person. Carnby had advertised for a secretary, stipulating that all applicants must offer a preliminary statement of their capacities by letter; and I had written in response to the advertisement.

Carnby, no doubt, was a scholarly recluse who felt averse to contact

with a long waiting-list of strangers; and he had chosen this manner of weeding out beforehand many, if not all, of those who were ineligible. He had specified his requirements fully and succinctly, and

these were of such nature as to bar even the average well-educated person. A knowl-

edge of Arabic was necessary, among other things; and luckily I had acquired a certain degree of scholarship in this unusual tongue.

I found the address, of whose location I had formed only a vague idea, at the end of a hilltop ave-

Into the dark magic of the House of Carnby there comes a visitor of dread.

nue in the suburbs of Oakland. It was a large, two-story house, over-shaded by ancient oaks and dark with a mantling of unchecked ivy, among hedges of unpruned privet and shrubbery that had gone wild for many years. It was separated from its neighbors by a vacant, weed-grown lot on one side and a tangle of vines and trees on the other, surrounding the black ruins of a burnt mansion.

Even apart from its air of long neglect, there was something drear and dismal about the place—something that inhered in the ivy-blurred outlines of the house, in the furtive, shadowy windows, and the very forms of the misshapen oaks and oddly sprawling shrubbery. Somehow, my elation became a trifle less exuberant, as I entered the grounds and followed an unswept path to the front door.

WHEN I found myself in the presence of John Carnby, my jubilation was still somewhat further diminished; though I could not have given a tangible reason for the premonitory chill, the dull, somber feeling of alarm that I experienced, and the leaden sinking of my spirits. Perhaps it was the dark library in which he received me as much as the man himself—a room whose musty shadows could never have been wholly dissipated by sun or lamplight. Indeed, it must have been this; for John Carnby himself, in a manner, was very much the sort of person I had pictured him to be.

He had all the earmarks of the lonely scholar who has devoted patient years to some line of erudite research. He was thin and bent, with a massive forehead and a mane of grizzled hair; and the pallor of the library was on his hollow, clean-shaven cheeks. But coupled with this, there was a nerve-shattered air, a fearful shrinking that was

more than the normal shyness of a recluse, and an unceasing apprehensiveness that betrayed itself in every glance of his dark-ringed, feverish eyes and every movement of his bony hands. In all likelihood his health had been seriously impaired by over-application; and I could not help but wonder at the nature of the studies that had made him a tremulous wreck. But there was something about him—perhaps the width of his bowed shoulders and the bold aquilinity of his facial outlines—which gave the impression of great former strength and a vigor not yet wholly exhausted.

His voice was unexpectedly deep and sonorous.

"I think you will do, Mr. Ogden," he said, after a few formal questions, most of which related to my linguistic knowledge, and in particular my mastery of Arabic. "Your labors will not be very heavy; but I want someone who can be on hand at any time required. Therefore you must live with me. I can give you a comfortable room, and I guarantee that my cooking will not poison you. I often work at night; and I hope you will not find the irregular hours too disagreeable."

NO doubt I should have been overjoyed at this assurance that the secretarial position was to be mine. Instead, I was aware of a dim, unreasoning reluctance and an obscure forewarning of evil as I thanked John Carnby and told him that I was ready to move in whenever he desired.

He appeared to be greatly pleased; and the queer apprehensiveness went out of his manner for a moment.

"Come immediately—this very afternoon, if you can," he said. "I shall be very glad to have you, and the sooner the better. I have been living entirely alone for some time;

and I must confess that the solitude is beginning to pall upon me. Also, I have been retarded in my labors for lack of the proper help. My brother used to live with me and assist me, but he has gone away on a long trip."

I returned to my downtown lodgings, paid my rent with the last few dollars that remained to me, packed my belongings, and in less than an hour was back at my new employer's home. He assigned me a room on the second floor, which, though unaired and dusty, was more than luxurious in comparison with the hall-bedroom that failing funds had compelled me to inhabit for some time past. Then he took me to his own study, which was on the same floor, at the further end of the hall. Here, he explained to me, most of my future work would be done.

I COULD hardly restrain an exclamation of surprise as I viewed the interior of this chamber. It was very much as I should have imagined the den of some old sorcerer to be. There were tables strewn with archaic instruments of doubtful use, with astrological charts, with skulls and alembics and crystals, with censers such as are used in the Catholic Church, and volumes bound in worm-eaten leather with verdigris-mottled clasps. In one corner stood the skeleton of a large ape; in another, a human skeleton; and overhead a stuffed crocodile was suspended.

There were cases overpiled with books, and even a cursory glance at the titles showed me that they formed a singularly comprehensive collection of ancient and modern works on demonology and the black arts. There were some weird paintings and etchings on the walls, dealing with kindred themes; and the whole atmosphere of the room exhaled a medley of half-forgotten

superstitions. Ordinarily I would have smiled if confronted with such things; but somehow, in this lonely, dismal house, besides the neurotic, hag-ridden Carnby, it was difficult for me to repress an actual shudder.

On one of the tables, contrasting incongruously with this melange of medievalism and Satanism, there stood a typewriter, surrounded with piles of disorderly manuscript. At one end of the room there was a small, curtained alcove with a bed in which Carnby slept. At the end opposite the alcove, between the human and simian skeletons, I perceived a locked cupboard that was set in the wall.

CARNBY had noted my surprise, and was watching me with a keen, analytic expression which I found impossible to fathom. He began to speak, in explanatory tones.

"I have made a life-study of demonism and sorcery," he declared. "It is a fascinating field, and one that is singularly neglected. I am now preparing a monograph, in which I am trying to correlate the magical practices and demon-worship of every known age and people. Your labors, at least for a while, will consist in typing and arranging the voluminous preliminary notes which I have made, and in helping me to track down other references and correspondences. Your knowledge of Arabic will be invaluable to me, for I am none too well-grounded in this language myself, and I am depending for certain essential data on a copy of the *Necronomicon* in the original Arabic text. I have reason to think that there are certain omissions and erroneous renderings in the Latin version of Olaus Wormius."

I had heard of this rare, well-nigh fabulous volume, but had never seen it. The book was supposed to contain the ultimate secrets of evil and forbidden knowl-

edge; and, moreover, the original text, written by the mad Arab, Abdul Alhazred, was said to be unprocurable. I wondered how it had come into Carnby's possession.

"I'll show you the volume after dinner," Carnby went on. "You will doubtless be able to elucidate one or two passages that have long puzzled me."

The evening meal, cooked and served by my employer himself, was a welcome change from cheap restaurant fare. Carnby seemed to have lost a good deal of his nervousness. He was very talkative, and even began to exhibit a certain scholarly gaiety after we had shared a bottle of mellow Sauterne. Still, with no manifest reason, I was troubled by intimations and forebodings which I could neither analyze nor trace to their rightful source.

WE returned to the study, and Carnby brought out from a locked drawer the volume of which he had spoken. It was enormously old, and was bound in ebony covers arabesqued with silver and set with darkly glowing garnets. When I opened the yellowing pages, I drew back with involuntary revulsion at the odor which arose from them—an odor that was more than suggestive of physical decay, as if the book had lain among corpses in some forgotten graveyard and had taken on the taint of dissolution.

Carnby's eyes were burning with a fevered light as he took the old manuscript from my hands and turned to a page near the middle. He indicated a certain passage with his lean forefinger.

"Tell me what you make of this," he said, in a tense, excited whisper.

I deciphered the paragraph, slowly and with some difficulty, and wrote down a rough English version with the pad and pencil

which Carnby offered me. Then, at his request, I read it aloud:

"It is verily known by few, but is nevertheless an attestable fact, that the will of a dead sorcerer hath power upon his own body and can raise it up from the tomb and perform therewith whatever action was unfulfilled in life. And such resurrections are invariably for the doing of malevolent deeds and for the detriment of others. Most readily can the corpse be animated if all its members have remained intact; and yet there are cases in which the excelling will of the wizard hath reared up from death the sundered pieces of a body hewn in many fragments, and hath caused them to serve his end, either separately or in a temporary reunion. But in every instance, after the action hath been completed, the body lapseth into its former state."

OF course, all this was errant gibberish. Probably it was the strange, unhealthy look of utter absorption with which my employer listened, more than that damnable passage from the Necronomicon, which caused my nervousness and made me start violently when, toward the end of my reading, I heard an indescribable slithering noise in the hall outside. But when I finished the paragraph and looked up at Carnby, I was more than startled by the expression of stark, staring fear which his features had assumed—an expression as of one who is haunted by some hellish phantom. Somehow, I got the feeling that he was listening to that odd noise in the hallway rather than to my translation of Abdul Alhazred.

"The house is full of rats," he explained, as he caught my inquiring glance. "I have never been able to get rid of them, with all my efforts."

The noise, which still continued, was that which a rat might make

in dragging some object slowly along the floor. It seemed to draw closer, to approach the door of Carnby's room, and then, after an intermission, it began to move again and receded. My employer's agitation was marked; he listened with fearful intentness and seemed to follow the progress of the sound with a terror that mounted as it drew near and decreased a little with its recession.

"I am very nervous," he said. "I have worked too hard lately, and this is the result. Even a little noise upsets me."

The sound had now died away somewhere in the house. Carnby appeared to recover himself in a measure.

"Will you please re-read your translation?" he requested. "I want to follow it very carefully, word by word."

I OBEYED. He listened with the same look of unholy absorption as before, and this time we were not interrupted by any noises in the hallway. Carnby's face grew paler, as if the last remnant of blood had been drained from it, when I read the final sentences; and the fire in his hollow eyes was like phosphorescence in a deep vault.

"That is a most remarkable passage," he commented. "I was doubtful about its meaning, with my imperfect Arabic; and I have found that the passage is wholly omitted in the Latin of Olaus Wormius. Thank you for your scholarly rendering. You have certainly cleared it up for me."

His tone was dry and formal, as if he were repressing himself and holding back a world of unsurmountable thoughts and emotions. Somehow I felt that Carnby was more nervous and upset than ever, and also that my rendering from the Necronomicon had in some mysterious manner contributed to his

perturbation. He wore a ghastly brooding expression, as if his mind were busy with some unwelcome and forbidden theme.

However, seeming to collect himself, he asked me to translate another passage. This turned out to be a singular incantatory formula for the exorcism of the dead, with a ritual that involved the use of rare Arabian spices and the proper intoning of at least a hundred names of ghouls and demons. I copied it all out for Carnby, who studied it for a long time with a rapt eagerness that was more than scholarly.

"That, too," he observed, "is not in Olaus Wormius." After perusing it again, he folded the paper carefully and put it away in the same drawer from which he had taken the Necronomicon.

THAT evening was one of the strangest I have ever spent. As we sat for hour after hour discussing renditions from that unhallowed volume, I came to know more and more definitely that my employer was mortally afraid of something; that he dreaded being alone and was keeping me with him on this account rather than for any other reason. Always he seemed to be waiting and listening with a painful, tortured expectation, and I saw that he gave only a mechanical awareness to much that was said. Among the weird appurtenances of the room, in that atmosphere of unmanifested evil, of untold horror, the rational part of my mind began to succumb slowly to a recrudescence of dark ancestral fears. A scorner of such things in my normal moments, I was now ready to believe in the most baleful creations of superstitious fancy. No doubt, by some process of mental contagion, I had caught the hidden terror from which Carnby suffered.

By no word or syllable, however, did the man admit the actual feelings that were evident in his demeanor, but he spoke repeatedly of a nervous ailment. More than once, during our discussion, he sought to imply that his interest in the supernatural and the Satanic was wholly intellectual, that he, like myself, was without personal belief in such things. Yet I knew infallibly that his implications were false; that he was driven and obsessed by a real faith in all that he pretended to view with scientific detachment, and had doubtless fallen a victim to some imaginary horror entailed by his occult researches. But my intuition afforded me no clue to the actual nature of this horror.

THERE was no repetition of the sounds that had been so disturbing to my employer. We must have sat till after midnight with the writings of the mad Arab open before us. At last Carnby seemed to realize the lateness of the hour.

"I fear I have kept you up too long," he said apologetically. "You must go and get some sleep. I am selfish, and I forget that such hours are not habitual to others, as they are to me."

I made the formal denial of his self-impeachment which courtesy required, said good night, and sought my own chamber with a feeling of intense relief. It seemed to me that I would leave behind me in Carnby's room all the shadowy fear and oppression to which I had been subjected.

Only one light was burning in the long passage. It was near Carnby's door; and my own door at the further end, close to the stair-head, was in deep shadow. As I groped for the knob, I heard a noise behind me, and turned to see in the gloom a small, indistinct body that sprang from the hall-landing to the top stair, disappearing from view. I was

horribly startled; for even in that vague, fleeting glimpse, the thing was much too pale for a rat and its form was not at all suggestive of an animal. I could not have sworn what it was, but the outlines had seemed unmentionably monstrous. I stood trembling violently in every limb, and heard on the stairs a singular bumping sound, like the fall of an object rolling downward from step to step. The sound was repeated at regular intervals, and finally ceased.

If the safety of soul and body had depended upon it, I could not have turned on the stair-light; nor could I have gone to the top steps to ascertain the agency of that unnatural bumping. Anyone else, it might seem, would have done this. Instead, after a moment of virtual petrification, I entered my room, locked the door, and went to bed in a turmoil of unresolved doubt and equivocal terror. I left the light burning; and I lay awake for hours, expecting momentarily a recurrence of that abominable sound. But the house was as silent as a morgue, and I heard nothing. At length, in spite of my anticipations to the contrary, I fell asleep and did not awaken till after many sodden, dreamless hours.

IT was ten o'clock, as my watch informed me. I wondered whether my employer had left me undisturbed through thoughtfulness, or had not arisen himself. I dressed and went downstairs, to find him waiting at the breakfast table. He was paler and more tremulous than ever, as if he had slept badly.

"I hope the rats didn't annoy you too much," he remarked, after a preliminary greeting. "Something really must be done about them."

"I didn't notice them at all," I replied. Somehow, it was utterly impossible for me to mention the queer, ambiguous thing which I

had seen and heard on retiring the night before. Doubtless I had been mistaken; doubtless it had been merely a rat after all, dragging something down the stairs. I tried to forget the hideously repeated noise and the momentary flash of unthinkable outlines in the gloom.

My employer eyed me with uncanny sharpness, as if he sought to penetrate my inmost mind. Breakfast was a dismal affair; and the day that followed was no less dreary. Carnby isolated himself till the middle of the afternoon, and I was left to my own devices in the well-supplied but conventional library downstairs. What Carnby was doing alone in his room I could not surmise; but I thought more than once that I heard the faint, monotonous intonations of a solemn voice. Horror-breeding hints and noisome intuitions invaded my brain. More and more the atmosphere of that house enveloped and stifled me with poisonous, miasmal mystery; and I felt everywhere the invisible brooding of malignant incubi.

IT was almost a relief when my employer summoned me to his study. Entering, I noticed that the air was full of a pungent, aromatic smell and was touched by the vanishing coils of a blue vapor, as if from the burning of Oriental gums and spices in the church censers. An Ispahan rug had been moved from its position near the wall to the center of the room, but was not sufficient to cover entirely a curving violet mark that suggested the drawing of a magic circle on the floor. No doubt Carnby had been performing some sort of incantation; and I thought of the awesome formula I had translated at his request.

However, he did not offer any explanation of what he had been doing. His manner had changed re-

markably and was more controlled and confident than at any former time. In a fashion almost business-like he laid before me a pile of manuscript which he wanted me to type for him. The familiar click of the keys aided me somewhat in dismissing my apprehensions of vague evil, and I could almost smile at the *recherché* and terrific information comprised in my employer's notes, which dealt mainly with formulae for the acquisition of unlawful power. But still, beneath my reassurance, there was a vague, lingering disquietude.

EVENING came; and after our meal we returned again to the study. There was a tenseness in Carnby's manner now, as if he were eagerly awaiting the result of some hidden test. I went on with my work; but some of his emotion communicated itself to me, and ever and anon I caught myself in an attitude of strained listening.

At last, above the click of the keys, I heard the peculiar slithering in the hall. Carnby had heard it, too, and his confident look had utterly vanished, giving place to the most pitiable fear.

The sound drew nearer and was followed by a dull, dragging noise, and then by more sounds of an unidentifiable slithering and scuttling nature that varied in loudness. The hall was seemingly full of them, as if a whole army of rats was hauling some carrion booty along the floor. And yet no rodent or number of rodents could have made such sounds, or could have moved anything so heavy as the object which came behind the rest. There was something in the character of those noises, something without name or definition, which caused a slowly creeping chill to invade my spine.

"Good Lord! What is all that racket?" I cried.

"The rats! I tell you it is only the rats!" Carnby's voice was a high, hysterical shriek.

A moment later, there came an unmistakable knocking on the door, near the sill. At the same time I heard a heavy thudding in the locked cupboard at the further end of the room. Carnby had been standing erect, but now he sank limply into a chair. His features were ashen, and his look was almost maniacal with fright.

The nightmare doubt and tension became unbearable and I ran to the door and flung it open, in spite of a frantic remonstrance from my employer. I had no idea what I should find as I stepped across the sill into the dim-lit hall.

WHEN I looked down and saw the thing on which I had almost trodden, my feeling was one of sick amazement and actual nausea. It was a human hand which had been severed at the wrist—a bony, bluish hand like that of a week-old corpse, with garden-mold on the fingers and under the long nails. *The damnable thing had moved!* It had drawn back to avoid me, and was crawling along the passage somewhat in the manner of a crab! And following it with my gaze, I saw that there were other things beyond it, one of which I recognized as a man's foot and another as a forearm. I dared not look at the rest. All were moving slowly, hideously away in a charnel procession, and I cannot describe the fashion in which they moved. Their individual vitality was horrifying beyond endurance. It was more than the vitality of life, yet the air was laden with a carrion taint. I averted my eyes and stepped back into Carnby's room, closing the door behind me with a shaking hand. Carnby was at my side with the key, which he turned in the lock with palsy-stricken fingers that had

become as feeble as those of an old man.

"You saw them?" he asked in a dry, quavering whisper.

"In God's name, what does it all mean?" I cried.

Carnby went back to his chair, tottering a little with weakness. His lineaments were agonized by the gnawing of some inward horror, and he shook visibly like an ague patient. I sat down in a chair beside him, and he began to stammer forth his unbelievable confession, half incoherently, with inconsequential mouthings and many breaks and pauses:

"He is stronger than I am—even in death, even with his body dismembered by the surgeon's knife and saw that I used. I thought he could not return after that—after I had buried the portions in a dozen different places, in the cellar, beneath the shrubs, at the foot of the ivy-vines. But the *Necronomicon* is right . . . and Helman Carnby knew it. He warned me before I killed him, he told me he could return—even *in that condition*.

"But I did not believe him. I hated Helman, and he hated me, too. He had attained to higher power and knowledge and was more favored by the Dark Ones than I. That was why I killed him—my own twin-brother, and my brother in the service of Satan and of Those who were before Satan. We had studied together for many years. We had celebrated the Black Mass together and we were attended by the same familiars. But Helman Carnby had gone deeper into the occult, into the forbidden, where I could not follow him. I feared him, and I could not endure his supremacy.

IT is more than a week—it is ten days since I did the deed. But Helman—or some part of him—has returned every night. . . .

God! His accursed hands crawling on the floor! His feet, his arms, the segments of his legs, climbing the stairs in some unmentionable way to haunt me! . . . Christ! His awful, bloody torso lying in wait! I tell you, his hands have come even by day to tap and fumble at my door . . . and I have stumbled over his arms in the dark.

"Oh, God! I shall go mad with the awfulness of it. But he wants me to go mad, he wants to torture me till my brain gives way. That is why he haunts me in this piecemeal fashion. He could end it all at any time, with the demoniacal power that is his. He could re-knit his sundered limbs and body and slay me as I slew him.

"How carefully I buried the parts, with what infinite forethought! And how useless it was! I buried the saw and knife, too, at the further end of the garden, as far away as possible from his evil, itching hands. But I did not bury the head with the other pieces—I kept it in that cupboard at the end of my room. Sometimes I have heard it moving there, as you heard it a little while ago. . . . But he does not need the head, his will is elsewhere, and can work intelligently through all his members.

"Of course, I locked all the doors and windows at night when I found that he was coming back. . . . But it made no difference. And I have tried to exorcise him with the appropriate incantations—with all those that I knew. To-day I tried that sovereign formula from the *Necronomicon* which you translated for me. I got you here to translate it. Also, I could no longer bear to be alone and I thought that it might help if there were someone else in the house. That formula was my last hope. I thought it would hold him—it is a most ancient and most dreadful incantation. But, as you have seen, it is useless. . . ."

HIS voice trailed off in a broken mumble, and he sat staring before him with sightless, intolerable eyes in which I saw the beginning flare of madness. I could say nothing—the confession he had made was so ineffably atrocious. The moral shock, and the ghastly supernatural horror, had almost stupefied me. My sensibilities were stunned; and it was not till I had begun to recover myself that I felt the irresistible surge of a flood of loathing for the man beside me.

I rose to my feet. The house had grown very silent, as if the macabre and charnel army of beleaguerment had now retired to its various graves. Carnby had left the key in the lock; and I went to the door and turned it quickly.

"Are you leaving? Don't go," Carnby begged in a voice that was tremulous with alarm, as I stood with my hand on the door-knob.

"Yes, I am going," I said coldly. "I am resigning my position right now; and I intend to pack my belongings and leave your house with as little delay as possible."

I OPENED the door and went out, refusing to listen to the arguments and pleadings and protestations he had begun to babble. For the nonce, I preferred to face whatever might lurk in the gloomy passage, no matter how loathsome and terrifying, rather than endure any longer the society of John Carnby.

The hall was empty; but I shuddered with repulsion at the memory of what I had seen, as I hastened to my room. I think I should have screamed aloud at the least sound or movement in the shadows.

I began to pack my valise with a feeling of the most frantic urgency and compulsion. It seemed to me that I could not escape soon enough from that house of abom-

inable secrets, over which hung an atmosphere of smothering menace. I made mistakes in my haste, I stumbled over chairs, and my brain and fingers grew numb with a paralyzing dread.

I had almost finished my task, when I heard the sound of slow measured footsteps coming up the stairs. I knew that it was not Carnby, for he had locked himself immediately in his room when I had left; and I felt sure that nothing could have tempted him to emerge. Anyway, he could hardly have gone downstairs without my hearing him.

The footsteps came to the top landing and went past my door along the hall, with that same, dead monotonous repetition, regular as the movement of a machine. Certainly it was not the soft, nervous tread of John Carnby.

Who, then, could it be? My blood stood still in my veins; I dared not finish the speculation that arose in my mind.

THE steps paused; and I knew that they had reached the door of Carnby's room. There followed an interval in which I could scarcely breathe; and then I heard an awful crashing and shattering noise, and above it the soaring scream of a man in the uttermost extremity of fear.

I was powerless to move, as if an unseen iron hand had reached forth to restrain me; and I have no idea how long I waited and listened. The scream had fallen away in a swift silence; and I heard nothing now, except a low, peculiar, recurrent sound which my brain refused to identify.

It was not my own volition, but a stronger will than mine, which drew me forth at last and impelled me down the hall to Carnby's study. I felt the presence of that will as an overpowering, superhu-

man thing—a demoniac force, a malign mesmerism.

The door of the study had been broken in and was hanging by one hinge. It was splintered as by the impact of more than mortal strength. A light was still burning in the room, and the unmentionable sound I had been hearing ceased as I neared the threshold. It was followed by an evil, utter stillness.

Again I paused, and could go no further. But, this time, it was something other than the hellish, all-pervading magnetism that petrified my limbs and arrested me before the sill. Peering into the room, in the narrow space that was framed by the doorway and lit by an unseen lamp, I saw one end of the Oriental rug, and the gruesome outlines of a monstrous, unmoving shadow that fell beyond it on the floor. Huge, elongated, misshapen, the shadow was seemingly cast by the arms and torso of a naked man who stooped forward with a surgeon's saw in his hand. Its monstrosity lay in this: though the shoulders, chest, abdomen and arms were all clearly distinguishable, the shadow was headless and appeared to terminate in an abruptly severed neck. It was impossible, considering the relative position, for the head to have been concealed from sight through any manner of foreshortening.

I WAITED, powerless to enter or withdraw. The blood had flowed back upon my heart in an ice-thick tide, and thought was frozen in my brain. An interval of termless horror, and then, from the hidden end of Carnby's room, from the direction of the locked cupboard, there came a fearsome and violent crash, and the sound of splintering wood and whining hinges, followed by the sinister, dismal thud of an unknown object striking the floor.

Again there was silence—a silence as of consummated Evil brooding above its unnamable triumph. The shadow had not stirred. There was a hideous contemplation in its attitude, and the saw was still held in its poisoning hand, as if above a completed task.

Another interval, and then, without warning, I witnessed the awful and unexplainable *disintegration* of the shadow, which seemed to break gently and easily into many different shadows ere it faded from view. I hesitate to describe the manner, or specify the places, in which this singular disruption, this manifold cleavage, occurred. Simultaneously, I heard the muffled clatter of a metallic implement on the Persian rug, and a sound that was not that of a single body but of many bodies falling.

Once more there was silence—a silence as of some nocturnal cemetery, when grave-diggers and ghouls are done with their macabre toil, and the dead alone remain.

DRAWN by that baleful mesmerism, like a somnambulist led by an unseen demon, I entered the room. I knew with a loathly prescience the sight that awaited me beyond the sill—the *double* heap of human segments, some of them fresh and bloody, and others already blue with beginning putrefaction and marked with earth-stains, that were mingled in abhorrent confusion on the rug.

A reddened knife and saw were protruding from the pile; and a little to one side, between the rug and the open cupboard with its shattered door, there reposed a human head that was fronting the other remnants in an upright posture. It was in the same condition of insipid decay as the body to which it had belonged; but I swear that I saw the fading of a malignant exultation from its features as I entered. Even with the marks of corruption upon them, the lineaments bore a manifest likeness to those of John Carnby, and plainly they could belong only to a twin brother.

The frightful inferences that smothered my brain with their black and clammy cloud are not to be written here. The horror which I beheld—and the greater horror which I surmised—would have put to shame hell's foulest enormities in their frozen pits. There was but one mitigation and one mercy: I was compelled to gaze only for a few instants on that intolerable scene. Then, all at once, I felt that something had withdrawn from the room; the malign spell was broken, the overpowering volition that had held me captive was gone. It had released me now, even as it had released the dismembered corpse of Helman Carnby. I was free to go; and I fled from the ghastly chamber and ran headlong through an unlit house and into the outer darkness of the night.

Tell Your Friends About
STRANGE TALES



As he watched, the buds burst into magnificent bloom.

Nasturtia

By Capt. S. P. Meek

AS Major Baxter entered the mess hall, he suddenly paused and stiffened like a setter dog on point. His face grew pale and with a trembling hand he pointed toward the table.

"Those things," he muttered in a low voice, vibrant with anger and yet, I thought, with an undertone of fear. "Those damnable things," he exclaimed again, his breath coming in labored gasps. Suddenly he found his voice.

"Sergeant Corrigan!" he roared.

A perturbed mess sergeant entered the room. Without a word, the major pointed at the table. The sergeant stared for a moment and a frightened look came into his

eyes as he faced his superior.

"I—I beg the Major's pardon, sir," he stammered. "The new orderly must have put them on, sir. I'll take them out at once."

"Do so!" said the major, cold anger in his voice. "Throw them out, and if anything of the sort ever

happens again, you will be held personally responsible. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," replied the sergeant. He hurried to the table and removed a large bunch of red roses from a vase and took them from the room.

"Pah! This place reeks like a slaughter-pen," cried the major. "Open the windows!"

A touching tale of deathless love and atonement lies behind the Major's tender passion for his flower garden.

A lieutenant hastened to open the windows and we assumed our seats. I looked hurriedly around the mess. No one seemed to have paid any attention to the scene, and, as a newcomer, it was not for me to take exception to the actions of the Mess President. The meal proceeded along its usual routine. Several times the major looked anxiously out of the windows at the lowering weather. With dramatic suddenness, the storm broke just as the meal was finished. Heralded by a terrific flash of lightning and a heaven-shaking peal of thunder, the rain came down in a torrent. Again and again the lightning flashed and the thunder rolled and growled. The wind howled like a soul in torment.

MAJOR BAXTER fretted for a few moments and then rose, leaving his coffee untouched. He walked to the coat rack and took down his raincoat and campaign hat.

"Going out to put your flowers to bed, Major?" asked Captain Morgan, the adjutant.

The major smiled.

"Yes," he said, "this storm is a little too severe for them."

He went out into the driving rain and I turned to Morgan, who sat on my right, for an explanation.

"Just the Old Man's hobby," he said when I questioned him. "You haven't seen his garden yet, have you? Well, when you do, be sure to rave over it. It is a wonder. He raises only one flower, nasturtiums, but he has the finest in the world. He has a movable roof rigged over them and whenever it storms, he goes out and lowers it. He'll sit there for hours with them."

"If he is so fond of flowers, why did he have those removed from the table?"

"Why, they were roses. He hates roses like poison. I have seen him leave a table at a formal dinner just

because roses were used in the decorations. It is a standing order that no roses are allowed in the mess. Have you taken over from Warren yet?"

The talk swung to other subjects and I was content to let the matter of the major's eccentricities drop. The storm continued with almost unabated violence for two hours. At last it passed over, and Major Baxter came in, soaking wet from head to foot and with his raincoat covered with mud. All of the officers had gone and I was alone in the club hall when he entered.

"Did your flowers weather the storm all right, sir?" I asked.

He smiled wanly.

"Yes, they're all right now," he said. "You see, they don't mind the rain, but they're always uneasy when there's thunder and lightning."

"You seem to think that they feel and fear like human beings, Major," I remarked.

"Why not?" he asked. "They have sensibilities exactly as you and I. They always droop and are afraid when lightning comes, and they brighten up when I come out to them. Besides, she was always afraid of lightning," he added softly.

I DID not reply and he stared silently into the fire. His gaze grew far-away and mystical, the light of inner knowledge shining out from his eyes.

"Who was the 'she' who was always afraid of lightning, Major?" I asked softly.

"Nasturtia," he replied absently, and then suddenly looking up he asked sharply. "What did you say?"

I repeated the question.

"No one," he answered brusquely. "Did I mention a 'she'? I must have been day-dreaming. Well, good night, I'm turning in. I'm chilled to the bone from that rain."

He spoke the truth when he

said that he was chilled. He woke in the morning delirious and with a raging fever. The medico called it double-lobar pneumonia. Whatever it was, it worked quickly, for he died at five that afternoon without recovering consciousness. Captain Morgan handed me an order detailing me as Summary Court Officer when he met me at supper that night.

"Your first job will be to inventory and take care of Major Baxter's effects," he said. "He is a bachelor and so far as I know, he hasn't a living relative. In that case his property will have to go to the Adjutant General's office for disposition. You'll find it all in army regulations."

Cursing my luck for drawing such a detail, I went to the suite of rooms in the club which the major had occupied and started my task. Most of his effects were of the type common to bachelor officers although the books attracted my attention. They were all of an esoteric type and dealt with the occult science. After a cursory examination, I turned my attention to a locked chest in the room.

After considerable search I found the key and opened it. It was packed solid with books. I lifted the first one out and examined it. It was a diary, and my heart jumped into my mouth when I saw the last entry was dated the night before. I read it.

"There were roses on the table to-night," he had written, "and I had them removed; but they were sent as a sign. It stormed and I went to her flowers. They were glad to see me and they wrapped their tendrils about me like a caress. In the storm I heard her voice. She told me that I am about through with this body and will soon pass into my next incarnation. Well, I am glad, for I will be relieved of memory for a few days, perhaps for

a whole life. I don't have to make the trip again for sixty years and I can die and be born again before then. When will it all end? I have been faithful for twenty-six hundred years. Should that not outweigh the faults of one cycle of life? Lord, have mercy!"

IN utter amazement I opened another volume. It was also a diary and it was dated twenty-two years before. Hurriedly I turned out the rest of them and looked. Major Baxter had kept a diary for thirty-five years and every word of it was there. I opened at the start and began reading.

Two days later, when I had finished the last of the diaries, I sat for a long time in thought. He had no living relatives to claim those volumes and I was unwilling for the world of scoffers to pore over them. It was a grave responsibility, but I shouldered it. I burned every word of that record of thirty-five years. Let him carry his secret to the grave.

It is not fair, however, to the few deep thinkers of the world, to rob them of the story. Under the mask of a disguised name, I am going to give it to the world from notes I made while reading. Believe it who will, it matters not to me and it matters not to him. There are some who will know, and it is for them that I am writing. This is Major Baxter's story:

Even as a child, Major Baxter had been deeply engrossed by the occult and the esoteric. Such studies were a sin in the religious little community where he was raised and he was forced to pursue them in secret. Where he got his knowledge, he did not reveal, but he had advanced far along the line of secret knowledge before he had grown to manhood. His family was a prominent one and he was appointed to West Point in the flurry that

attended the Spanish War. He was carried off his feet by the war fever and didn't protest, even though such a career hardly jibed with his secret studies.

HE graduated and was commissioned in 1902. The next four years were spent in routine garrison duties and he delved much deeper into esoteric doctrine. His big chance came four years later when he was assigned to the 15th Infantry, stationed in China. Once there, he gave a minimum of attention to his duties and a maximum to his studies. The next three years were interesting ones, detailing as they did his slow steps up the ladder of knowledge, but it is to an entry in 1909 that I must next give attention. In that year his studies had progressed to such an extent that Lo Pui Hong, his master, pronounced him ready for initiation into the greatest of all mysteries, the vision of the Temple of the Rock.

He secured a leave of absence and with his master, penetrated into the hidden fastnesses of secret China, to places where white men had never gone and where they never will go, save on the same errand on which he went. At the temple he underwent the traditional three days of fasting, five days of suffering and seven days of silence. In the dead of night while he prayed before the Holy of Holies, his vision came. Here I will quote verbatim from the diary.

"For hours I prayed for a revelation. At length the wall before me became cloudy and seemed to melt. I felt a tremendous wrench and suddenly found myself standing beside my unconscious body. I looked at it curiously. A sound of trumpets reached me and I became aware of figures moving before me where the wall had been. A regal procession came into view and

I recognized myself riding in the midst of it, clad in sumptuous robes. I knew that I was looking at a former incarnation.

"WE arrived at a magnificent temple and the howdah of the leading elephant was opened. A veiled female figure descended and I took her by the hand and led her into the temple. The High Priest came to meet me and bowed low.

"What would the Rajah of Balkh of his servant?" he asked.

"Thou shalt wed me to the Princess Nasturtia," I replied, "for she is the one I have chosen to share my throne. To her I pledge eternal constancy."

"It is well," he replied, "for only so may you wed the elect one."

"He intoned the wedding chant and the procession reformed and went to the palace. In the zenana, when all had retired, the princess unveiled. God, what beauty! As she crept into my arms, her eyes shining with love, the scene faded and another took its place.

"A high revel was in progress and it needed no second glance to convince me that I had been drinking heavily. My beloved Princess Nasturtia was seated by my side as the nautch girls whirled before us. Nasturtia looked sad. The reason was that I was not watching her but kept my eyes riveted on one of the dancers, a strikingly handsome girl with a certain feline grace and a bold, lascivious glance. As time passed I drank more and more until at last I seized a cup, and, looking full into the eyes of the dancer, I drained it. Nasturtia, with a look of pain, laid a restraining hand on me but I did not heed her. I shook her off and ordered all to be gone, save the dancer. My princess laid a restraining hand on my shoulder.

"My lord," she faltered, "remember thy oath. Not with impunity

may such a one be broken.'

"I shook her hand away.

"'Begone! Guards, remove her!' I cried.

"Slowly she disappeared and I caught the voluptuous dancer in my arms. Again the scene faded.

"**I** STOOD in the high court of the temple with Nasturtia, the grief of ages in her eyes, standing beside me. My royal raiment was replaced with a beggar's rags. On the carved dais before me sat a man with the face of a god, and I knew him to be the Holy Prince, Siddhartha Gautama.

"'What hast thou to say?' asked the Buddha with compassion and sorrow in his holy eyes.

"'O Lord, I have sinned against the Law and have forsaken the Middle Way and broken my oath,' I replied with a heavy heart. Siddhartha turned to Nasturtia.

"'Cleave you still to him, although he has been false to his oath to thee?' he asked.

"'Yea, O Lord,' she answered; 'through life and death, through merit and sin, I cleave to him who is part of me and with whom I shall tread the long way that lies before us.'

"'Then shall a part of his sin be rested on thy head,' he replied.

"The Buddha then turned to me. 'Hearken now to my words. Sinned thou hast and most grievously, and by so doing thou hast retarded thy development for a thousand cycles. Yet, lose not all hope, for as thy sin has been one of inconstancy, by constancy canst thou atone and win back merit. As thou hast sinned through desire, it is my decree that desire shall follow thee throughout the ages until by constancy thou hast recovered the merit thou hast lost. Women shall love thee and shall offer thee all, and the one with whom thou hast sinned shall follow thee and tempt thee through-

out all the ages and through all thy lives. Yield to her but once, and another thousand cycles loom before thee.

"'For thee, Princess Nasturtia, who have taken upon yourself a measure of this man's sin, thee I shall transform into a flower that thou mayst await the fulfilment of time. Yet this I grant to him, that thy likeness he may ever have with him to hold him to his trust. In an inaccessible swamp shalt thou grow and near thee shall grow the other, save during such times as she shall rove the world to tempt him. Once in each thousand moons shall he make a pilgrimage to thy dwelling place and carry pure water for thee. If he shall lapse over the time, the plant will die and thy soul shall join me in Nirvana. Come near that I may transform thee.'

"**M**Y princess approached the dais and he touched her with a wand. She faded and turned into a flower, such a flower as had never before been seen upon the earth. Sorrowfully I turned from the temple, and, as I passed, the dancer plucked at my sleeve, but I turned from her and fled.

"Again the vision faded and I was aware of the passing of ages, until again I stood before the great Lord Buddha.

"'Thus far, thou hast done well,' he said, 'but the time approacheth for thy pilgrimage. Go thou and fulfil it!'

"'But where, Great Lord, does she dwell?' I asked.

"The Buddha stretched forth his hand and the temple wall melted into a scene where I saw a little island set in the midst of a great swamp. There a nasturtium grew and near it a rose. Without words, the Buddha made me aware of its location.

"There came another wrench of pain as I returned to the flesh to

find myself again in the Temple of the Rock."

Major Baxter applied at once for a transfer back to the United States and since he had been for over three years in China, he obtained it. It took him about a year to make the arrangements he thought necessary and then he resigned his commission. Three months of leave was all that he could get and he was sure that the trip he planned would take him longer than that. As soon as his resignation was accepted, he sailed with his equipment for Belem, at the mouth of the Amazon. With a gang of Indian paddlers, he started for the interior, headed for the Agua Tribulas, a fabled swamp where the water is never still, deep in the Brazilian jungles.

HE made his way up the Amazon to the Rio Xingu and up it to its headwaters without much trouble although he lost a number of men on the great rapids of the Xingu. It was after he had left the river and pressed overland, or rather, overswamp to the vicinity of the Agua Tribulas, that his Indians deserted him to a man. They warned him that the Great Spirit of the Troubled Waters would never allow him to enter the forbidden domain. However, he pressed on, although he was forced to abandon the collapsible canoe which had been carried that far with great labor. He carried nothing with him except a heavy knife and all the fresh water that he could carry. I quote again, this time from an entry made four days after he had left his Indians.

"It is dreadful in the jungle. It is a vast stretch of black, fetid water, covered with a green slime. The stench of decaying vegetation is almost more than I can bear. I have seen no living things save snakes, lizards and a myriad of tormenting insects which turn life

into a hell of torment. At night the great vampire bats swing around overhead and I dare not lie down to sleep lest they make the sleep my last one. The leeches have already taken so much blood that I dare not lose more. To-day I was forced to swim four times. Strange reptiles rushed at me from time to time, but by some miracle I managed to escape. Luckily I have met with no alligators since I entered the swamp, for in my weakened condition, I don't believe I could fight one. My water is all gone, save one canteen which I am saving for Nasturtia. My lips are parched and my tongue is so swollen that I can hardly close my mouth. On all sides is the putrid water of the swamp but I dare not drink it, for it is full of fever germs which would soon end my journey. How much longer I can stagger on, I don't know, but I will keep my one canteen of water sacred for her. I can do no more than die, and death would be preferable to this suffering, were it not that I would lose her for all eternity. Be merciful, Lord, and let me reach her soon that I may give her this water. Then I will drink of the swamp and die. How long, Lord, how long?"

IT was the evening of the next day that he came in sight of the tiny island looming above the swamp. With a feeble croak, he summoned the last remaining vestiges of his strength and struggled through the slime to reach it, only to find an unscalable embankment before him. It seemed the end, and he sank down in the mire and sobbed in weariness. A vagrant breeze brought to him a faint odor of flowers and it spurred his lagging courage.

He started around the island and on the further side he found a break in the escarpment. He scrambled up and found himself on the island:

High in the center grew a single nasturtium plant, almost dead from lack of water, with withered and yellowing leaves. Near it, blooming and fragrant, grew a rose, thriving on the fetid waters of the swamp which were killing the other plant.

He drew the cork of his canteen and poured the fresh water on the roots of the nasturtium, and then came a miracle. As he watched, the leaves of the plant again grew green and the buds burst into magnificent bloom.

He fell on the ground before it, and the green leaves and tendrils of the nasturtium bent forward and wrapped themselves about his wasted and tortured body. One magnificent orange flower bent over and touched him lightly on the cheek and in his ears rang a gentle, caressing voice.

"Oh, my beloved one," it mur-

mured softly, "I knew thou wouldst come, although the rose taunted me that thou wouldst fail. Look! I have for thee, as I have had each time, a perfect seed. Take it, beloved, for in its flowers my spirit dwelleth ever near thee."

He plucked the seed and then, with his last remaining strength, tore up the rose by the roots and hurled it into the swamp. To his ears came a mocking laugh and the seductive voice of the dancer rang out over the troubled waters.

"I have lost this round, but I have left my mark. Look thou at thy hand! . . ."

I examined Major Baxter as he lay in his coffin the day before his funeral. In the palm of his right hand was a series of old scars and cicatrices which looked as though they had been deep scratches. In outline, they formed a perfect rose.

As with
ASTOUNDING STORIES
We'll Welcome
Suggestions from Readers.
For
STRANGE TALES
Is Your Magazine

—The Editor

*It had taken the
form of a young
woman.*



A Cry from Beyond

By Victor Rousseau

I HAD seen from the first that the séance was doomed to failure. Doctor Claude Merrick had inveigled three distinguished physicians into attending, and we had got into the usual rut. Charlie Wing, Merrick's Chinese boy, and a born medium, had been possessed in turn by the spirits of Queen Victoria, Mary, Queen of Scots, and Julius Caesar, and was now writhing uneasily, preparatory

to awaking to his natural state.

And then it came, that brief "Help me! I don't know where I am!"

"Who are you?" asked Merrick.

"He is painting in his room. I can't get in. I can't wake up. I hate Milburn."

"But who are you?" asked Merrick again.

"Parlez-vous? Parlez-vous?" came the answer. Then Charlie sneezed and woke, and the séance was at

"She lay in her crib, the weazened look of an old man on her features."

an end. Merrick turned on the lights. The three physicians rose, looking bored and annoyed; a little ashamed, too, as if they had placed themselves in a ridiculous position.

"Very interesting, Doctor Merrick," said Forbes, the brain specialist. "It certainly gives one food for thought."

"A quite extraordinary exhibition," said Burroughs, the head of the State Hospital for the Insane. "Though you'll agree with me, I'm sure, that we shall have to go a considerable way further before we can apply your methods to the average case."

The third physician said very little, and looked frankly annoyed. Merrick ushered them out, a smile upon his lips. Charlie was straightening the séance room preparatory to serving dinner. Out of his trances he knew nothing that had occurred, and was just a good Chinese servant.

"Well, Benson, failure—rank failure," laughed Merrick, when he had got over his annoyance. "I warned those three wiseacres that they might expect just the sort of thing that has happened. Mischievous spirits, pretending to be the shades of the mighty dead; elementals playing pranks upon humans; astrals, discarded shells of thought, mere automata, attracted to the medium and pouring out the contents of their soulless minds in gibberish."

"I explained it all to them. I tried to tell them of the enormous difficulties. I begged them to realize that it is like the task of the pearl-diver, satisfied with one pearl out of a barrel of waste products. It didn't go. It never goes. These fellows demand an instant, logical explanation of heaven and hell and the hereafter, by James Johnson, late of the Union League Club, together with full proof of identity."

IT was disappointing. I might almost say, heartrending. If only the investigator would try to understand what he is up against! Imagine a public call-box, with the receiver off the hook, and a mob, all at the same time, trying to transmit messages, while half asleep, to various friends; also imagine a group of urchins interrupting them to shout opprobrious epithets or to play pranks, and you begin to get some notion of the difficulties of posthumous communication. But I had seen enough in my capacity as secretary to Doctor Claude Merrick to be convinced of the reality of inter-communication between the dead and the living.

As a physician of considerable reputation, naturally he did not court publicity. Yet, believing in the truth of this, believing, too, that nearly all cases of insanity are due to what is termed "possession," he felt it his duty to attempt to convince some of his own profession.

Charlie Wing's mediumistic powers had been discovered by accident. The boy had been Merrick's servant for a year before he was discovered entranced in the kitchen one evening, a piece of paper on the table, a pencil in his hand, and on the paper a certain message—but that is by the way. He was setting the table now with a bland smile on his yellow face; as if nothing had occurred that afternoon at all out of the line of his ordinary duties.

"Benson," said Merrick, "did you get that fragment that came through at the end?"

"About Milburn?"

"Yes. That was unusual, getting a name across, when the communicator could not give his own."

"You think that was real?" I asked.

"It sounded as if the communicator made a wild grab at the telephone just as the line was going

out of business. Most of our veridical messages have come through in that way."

"But what does Milburn signify?" I asked.

"It is a fishing village on the coast of Massachusetts. There is an artists' colony there, I believe, although I expect it has now broken up for the winter. You remember our case with the policeman who was painting landscapes under the guidance of the late Weathermore?"

I remembered that case. Weathermore, cut off in his prime, had inspired a young policeman of artistic powers to continue his work. In the end, Merrick had persuaded the dead man to abandon his attempts at continuing the vicarious practice of his art.

"I AM inclined to think," said Merrick, "that Weathermore was back of that communication. Somebody is in trouble at Milburn, and Weathermore is helping him while he is asleep. That is why he couldn't wake up, as he phrased it."

"Who can it be?"

"He gave his name as Parlez-vous," said Merrick thoughtfully. "Of course, that is the sort of prank a low-class spirit or elemental would indulge in. At the same time, the difficulty of getting names across, except pictographically, is enormous."

He paced the room. Charlie had set the soup on the table, but Merrick, deep in thought, seemed not to perceive it, and I knew he would not appreciate having his attention called to the matter.

Suddenly he stepped into the office adjacent and came back with a copy of "Who's Who." He turned the pages rapidly.

"Here you are, Benson," he said. "Born 1887, educated at Groton, studied art in Paris. Exhibited, et cetera. Married, first, Georgiana

McLaren, daughter of Ian McLaren, of Boston, 1912; second, Millicent Hayes, daughter of James Hayes, of London, 1926. Daughter, Elsie, born 1928."

"Well?" I asked.

"It was Weathermore who was at the back of this, Benson," said the doctor, closing the heavy volume. "Very clever of him getting that word Milburn across like that, with Mary, Queen of Scots and Julius Caesar cluttering up the wires. But I'm not so sure the message has reference to him, after all. It said that 'he' was painting in the room."

"If it was Weathermore, he wouldn't have gone to all that trouble to communicate unless this person is in desperate need of help," continued the doctor.

"But, Doctor Merrick," I said, "you haven't told me who this person is, or how you got his name," I protested.

HE stared at me. "Eh? What's that? I thought I'd told you," he answered. "Why, our friend, Parlez-vous, is French—Alfred French, one of the most representative of modern American painters. Rather ingenious of our friend Weathermore, wasn't it? But I'm inclined to think it was his wife who sent out that appeal for help while resting this afternoon."

"Come along, Benson, the soup's getting cold."

I think it was the doctor's realization that Weathermore would not have asked his aid in any ordinary case that decided him to go down to Milburn. Fortunately it was not difficult to obtain a note of introduction to French, and, after registering at the local hotel, we strolled along the shore road to French's bungalow.

There were some half-dozen houses and bungalows standing along the shore, but all except

French's had been closed for the winter. His was the last of all, a long, old-fashioned, single-story cottage standing on the very edge of the low cliff, with the Atlantic breakers roaring underneath and tossing foam almost to the doorstep.

It was a desolate place, even in summer, and much more so now, with the few straggling birches almost denuded to their withered leaves, and that expanse of sea and sky, and the roar of the ocean perpetually in one's ears. There was an eerie feeling about the cottage, too, which did not decrease as we stepped up and Merrick rapped with the ancient brass knocker upon the dented plate.

IT was French himself who opened the door—I remembered having seen his portrait somewhere. His hair was disordered, his face anxious.

"My name is Merrick—Doctor Merrick," my companion began.

"Thank God you've come, Doctor," answered French. "My wife has been asleep since two o'clock this afternoon, and I can't wake her up!"

Without further explanations, Merrick entered the cottage, and I followed at his heels. French led the way into a large bedroom, tastefully furnished in Colonial style. Beyond it I could see his studio, with paintings on easels. On the bed lay a young woman, apparently fast asleep. Her face was flushed, her eyes closed, her breathing stertorous. In a crib beside her, a child of three was sitting up, playing assiduously with a doll. She raised her eyes solemnly to ours, and then returned to her doll without a word. Her face was strangely white.

Merrick stepped to the bedside and raised the woman's arm. It remained extended stiffly in the air.

He made two or three passes over her face and snapped his fingers.

"Wake up!" he commanded her.

Instantly the arm dropped. The woman opened her eyes, looked at us in surprise, and sat up.

"Why, Alfred, what's the matter?" she inquired, in astonishment.

FRENCH, overcome with gratitude, and a little awed, had readily agreed to Merrick's request that he should let his wife believe we had been called in to treat her. He promised to make full explanations later, and Mrs. French's state of health certainly called for attention.

"I never feel well here," she told us. "All last summer I was upset, but this summer I've been worse than ever before. But Alfred loves this place, and so I agreed to remain until the middle of November. You see," she added, "he used to come here with his first wife, Georgiana, year after year. She died here suddenly, seven years ago. She's buried in the old cemetery on the hilltop.

"You may say I'm foolish to accede to his wishes," she went on, "but, you see, Alfred's art means everything to him, and then we are very happy together. And Elsie needs the sea air. You may have noticed—"

Merrick nodded. "Anemic, decidedly," he said. "But how about yourself, Mrs. French? What is the chief trouble?"

"I think it began with worrying about Elsie," she answered. "She was so healthy when we came here in June, and almost immediately she began to be sick. We've had several doctors here, including Messenger, who came all the way from Boston, but they can't find out what's the cause of the trouble, and all they advise is to let her have the benefit of the sea air."

"But your own symptoms, Mrs.

French?" asked the doctor again.

"I can't sleep from worrying," she answered. "And when I do sleep, I sleep for hours, and Alfred can't wake me. And I have the most dreadful dreams."

"Ah, and can you describe these dreams to me? I mean, any dream that seems to recur pretty constantly?"

"I can't remember a thing, but they're terrible beyond imagination. I know that I try to wake, and I can't wake. And then I'm afraid to go to sleep again, and all of a sudden my eyes close, and—"

She began sobbing hysterically, and Merrick questioned her no further.

PUTTING little Elsie to bed was a rite, as in so many American families where everything centers about the child. First, French had to ride her on his back up and down the studio, and pretend to be respectively a slow old horse, a spirited charger, and an elephant. Then Millicent French had to tell her stories, with dramatic impersonations, being successively, father bear, mother bear, and baby bear.

And then came the rite of the doll. For George had to be disrobed, with pretense of bathing, and robed in his nightgown, and rocked to sleep, and finally laid upon the pillow beside his little mistress. Only then did Elsie consent to having the light put out, and even then there had to be two farewell kisses.

"Has your little girl always insisted that that is a male doll?" asked Merrick of French, when the parents had finally disposed of their offspring.

"No, she thinks it's a girl doll," he answered, "but she insists that the name is George."

"How long has she done that?"

"Since we came here this summer. As a matter of fact, my first

wife's name was Georgiana," he added. "It's possible that the child has heard the name mentioned, although naturally my wife and I seldom refer to her. I hope you two gentlemen will have supper with us," he added. "We can't offer you very much in the way of a meal, but if you can stand—"

"We'll be delighted," answered Merrick promptly.

We sat down to cold ham and tongue, a salad, and some dessert that did credit to Mrs. French's cooking. After the dishes had been cleared away, Millicent French withdrew, apologizing for leaving us.

"I really believe I'm going to have a good, sound sleep to-night," she said. "You've done me good in some way, Doctor Merrick."

She looked very charming as she smiled and bade us good night.

IHAD anticipated that explanations would be somewhat difficult, but to my surprise this did not prove to be the case. French had known Weathermore, and he was not unfavorably disposed toward the consideration of psychic matters. The doctor told him frankly of the communication.

"It's all very extraordinary," said French, leaning forward in his chair in the big studio. "As a matter of fact, I've—I've been afraid the influences here were not exactly good for either my wife or daughter. The truth is—well, my first wife and I were very happy here."

He sighed. "You see, Elsie and she were friends," he said. "I felt that in a way it brought us all closer together. You see, as I told you, I am a believer in—"

"I am going to speak frankly to you, French," Merrick interrupted him. "You have made a monumental error, and you are likely to pay dearly for it. You believed that

the dead are in intimate association with the living, thinking the same thoughts, actuated by the same feelings as when they were alive."

"Isn't that so?" cried French, starting up in his chair. "Do you mean to tell me—?"

"I mean to tell you," answered Merrick, "that the boundary which was set between the dead and the living was never meant to be crossed. If crossed at all, it must be under expert guidance."

There was a solemnity about his tones that impressed us both with a sense of awe, almost of terror.

"The dead," said Merrick, "however intensely they long to revisit those whom they loved, can only re-enter this sensory life as we enter the astral world—in sleep; that is to say, in dreams. To them, everything is distorted, changed, and on their plane matter is so plastic that their wishes insensibly create new situations which they mistake for reality.

"I have known a father, who loved his child beyond anything on earth, and sought to revisit it. He did so as a haunting poltergeist, flinging crockery around, knocking down pictures from the walls, terrorizing the child he loved with hideous manifestations, and all this without the slightest idea that he was causing trouble or making his presence manifest at all."

"Then," said French in a shaky voice, "you mean that Georgiana—?"

MERRICK did not answer him for a while. Presently he spoke again.

"It is fortunate that Weathermore sent me here," he said. "I must tell you frankly, French, that the disease has, in my opinion, already progressed so far, that, even if you were to leave Milburn immediately; if you were to burn down this house and plough up the

ground on which it stands, it is unlikely it could be cured."

"Do you mean—good God, do you mean that Georgiana is the cause of—of my wife's and daughter's illness?" asked French.

"But, my dear sir, you summoned her, did you not, even though the call was partly an unconscious one? Did you not come here with the idea of entering into a sort of communion with her? That desire reached far into the next world, French."

French said in shaky tones, "She always wanted a child. It was the unhappiest thing in her life."

Merrick nodded gravely. "I see that your own diagnosis is pretty correct," he replied. "You probably realized that your wife was in a cataleptic state this afternoon? You know what that portends?"

"That she was in an abnormal condition. That she—she—"

"That she had been thrown into a mediumistic condition, not necessarily by your first wife, but by the elemental influences that are always waiting to rush in and obtain sustenance at the expense of human beings, just as humanity preys upon the beasts, and the beasts upon the vegetable kingdom."

Again there was silence. "What am I to do?" asked French.

"With your permission, I am going to keep watch in the bedroom to-night," answered Merrick. "Perhaps you will permit Mr. Benson to stay there with me. At what hour does your wife fall asleep?"

"Now it is curious you should have asked me that," French answered. "Invariably at twenty minutes before one. It—it is the hour at which Georgiana died," he added in a shaken whisper.

IT was exactly twenty minutes before one when French came back into the studio and informed

us that his wife was asleep. We went in softly. Millicent French was fast asleep, but her breathing was natural, her skin moist and of a natural color. In the crib beside her the child slept, clutching the big doll in her arms. There was nothing eerie about the room. Outside, beneath the cliff, the sea splashed softly. There was a half-moon in the sky, casting a flood of silver through the windows.

Merrick drew up two chairs beside little Elsie's crib and sat watching her. I wondered why it was the child he watched instead of the mother. I sat down beside him, while French flung himself into a big armchair at the side of his wife's bed and sat there, his head in his hands.

The pose Merrick assumed, his air of quiet watchfulness reminded me of Luke Fildes' celebrated painting of "The Doctor." Strength seemed to radiate from him. I knew that, what human being could do, Merrick would do. A small clock on the dressing-table ticked away the minutes.

It seemed close in the room, despite the season and the fact that the window was partly open. Time and again I felt my eyes closing; then I would open them with a sudden start, always to see Merrick seated there, watching. I could see the hands of the clock in the flood of moonlight. It was two o'clock now. Nothing had happened.

Then slowly a feeling of intense depression began to overcome me. I seemed to feel another presence in the room. It was nothing evil, but something bewildered, baffled, groping through darkness. The feeling of closeness was becoming accentuated.

The next thing I knew, I was lying on a lounge in the studio, and a flood of sunlight was streaming in through the window. There was a smell of coffee. Merrick came

briskly out of the kitchen, carrying a tray with plates and cups.

"Awake, Benson?" he asked. "Don't worry; I slept, too. It was too strong for us. But you pretty nearly got into the cataleptic state. We're starting back after breakfast to get Charlie. He's about the last hope for the Frenches."

I WAS shocked to see the change in Millicent French and Elsie when we returned with Charlie Wing on the following day. Mrs. French was almost in a condition of collapse, while the child had lost all the energy she had shown on that evening of our arrival. She lay in her crib, looking like a little waxen image, and clutching the doll tightly in her arms. There was the weazened look of an old man upon her features.

French had told his wife that Charlie had come to help her till she grew stronger, and she had not the energy to ask any questions, but seemed to accept our presence as natural.

"Tell me, Doctor Merrick, is there any hope?" he asked late that afternoon, while we three sat together in the studio, and Charlie scoured the dishes in the kitchen, whistling a cheerful tune the while. "That Chinese boy of yours—is it possible he can be of any assistance?"

"Charlie is one of the best mediums I have known," responded the doctor. "I can say no more than that. To-night, my friend, we shall either free your wife and daughter from this influence forever, or—"

He shrugged his shoulders. "If we win through, French," he said, "remember for the rest of your life that the paths of the living and the dead lie in different directions, and never make that mistake again."

He turned to me. "Benson, I think I'd like to take a little stroll

to clear my brain," he said. "Will you come with me?"

WE left the house and struck inland across a field, following a narrow road with the dead stalks of goldenrod waist-high on either side of us. Crows flapped and cawed on dead stumps, or wheeled noisily into the air. A little distance back of the house was the old burying-ground. It contained some twenty-five or thirty graves, the headstones, which had all either tilted or fallen, dating back to a century before in some cases. It was not difficult to locate that of French's first wife, if only for the comparative newness of the stone. A wreath of immortelles lay on the mound.

Merrick stopped and read the inscription.

"'Let her rest in peace,'" he commented, translating the three Latin words. "Easier said than done, French. Your idea of letting her rest in peace, poor soul, is to set off an alarm clock in her ears!"

He turned to me. "Benson, there's a spade under the back seat of the car," he said. "Please bring it here at once. And don't let French see you."

We had parked the car just around the curve of the shore road, and it was not difficult to get the spade and strike a course back behind the untenanted cottages without French seeing me. But Merrick's sudden order had filled me with apprehensions of terror. It was only too easy to guess the purpose in his mind. My every instinct revolted, and with that rebellion came doubts of the whole business.

Suppose Merrick was self-deluded, Charlie Wing an impostor, the whole French affair cleverly staged by the Chinese, and Millicent French and the child simply the victims of some obscure disease? To violate the sanctity of the grave,

and unknown to French himself, seemed to me intolerable.

BUT when I saw Merrick waiting quietly beside the mound, the strength that always radiated from him calmed my doubts. As if understanding my state of mind, he said:

"There's no need for you to wait, Benson, if it disturbs you. Suppose you stroll back slowly, and I'll rejoin you presently."

"No, I'll see this thing through," I answered. "But are you sure—?"

He clapped his hand on my shoulder. "I'm as sure as I've ever been sure of anything," he replied.

With that he set to work. With a strength of which I had believed him incapable, he began digging into the mound and tossing the clods aside. It was worse than eery, it was horrible, to see him progressing in the failing light, with those birds of ill omen sitting on the stumps and rails of the decaying fence, and watching him.

Soon Merrick was below the ground, only his head and shoulders showing, and these disappeared from my view as he dug deeper, flinging up great shovelfuls of earth beside the trench. He was still working with undiminished energy. I stepped to the side of the grave and volunteered to take my turn at the work, but he only shook his head and went on.

NEVERTHELESS he was fully a half hour at work before I saw a corner of the coffin come into view, and it was ten minutes more before the casket lay completely exposed to view. Then Merrick inserted the blade beneath a corner of the rotten wood, and began to lever at the lid. That was when I stepped back, so as not to see.

But I could hear, and I shuddered as I heard the sudden rend-

ing, splintering sound which indicated that the lid had given. Involuntarily I closed my eyes.

"Come here, Benson," called Merrick.

Mastering my horror with a supreme effort, I stepped once more to the side of the grave. I opened my eyes and looked down. But all that I could make out inside the coffin was a heap of white bones and a few little mounds of dust.

Merrick leaped up and caught me as I reeled. For a moment everything went black. Then I recovered myself and stood unassisted.

"It's—it's all right," I muttered. "I thought—"

"Why, what's the matter, Benson?" asked the doctor in evident astonishment. "What was it that you expected to see?"

But suddenly he understood what had been passing through my mind. "Did you expect to see flesh and blood inside the coffin, man?" he asked. "No, no, Benson, I assure you you're on the wrong trail altogether."

Yes, it was true—I had expected to see something far more terrible than a mere heap of moldering bones. And I was mystified beyond measure as the doctor laid down the spade and motioned to me to accompany him back to the house.

IT was no use asking Merrick questions or demanding explanations before he was ready to volunteer statements. So much I had learned at a very early date in our association. When he was ready, he would explain, and until then I must just be content to puzzle out my own solutions in my mind.

But what had been the purpose of opening the grave and leaving it open? Had Merrick really expected to find nothing but bones in the coffin? Again my doubts returned. I was in a state of con-

siderable agitation by the time we got back to the bungalow.

Charlie Wing was hard at work with the dinner in the kitchen, and whistling discordantly in his usual cheerful manner.

It was a sorry meal that we three sat down to. The child had fallen asleep, and Millicent French had refused to leave her; Charlie had brought her a light meal, but she had only drunk a little tea. French declined to eat anything. I saw his haggard eyes watching every movement that the doctor made. There appeared to be resentment in them now. He was in the state of mind when an explosion is imminent.

"I've had enough of this fooling!" he shouted suddenly, starting to his feet. "Leave this house, the three of you! What do I know about you? You two came here with a lot of poppycock, and then you brought in this Chink! How do I know what your schemes are? Leave this house, I tell you, or, by God, I'll kill you!"

HIS voice rose into a shriek. He leaped across the room, snatched a revolver from a drawer, and pointed it at Merrick's head. "Now will you go?" he shouted, his face working with maniacal anger.

The doctor looked at French without any change of expression. He moved his hands almost imperceptibly in front of the enraged man's face, snapped his fingers, reached out and took the weapon and slipped it into his pocket. French stared at him with a bewildered look.

"I feel—queer," he said, clapping his hand to his head.

"Go and lie down, my dear fellow," replied Merrick. "You'll be feeling better presently." And, as French stumbled away, the doctor turned to me with an expression of satisfaction.

"Well, that's the best thing that's happened yet," he said. "You don't understand, Benson? You realized that French was temporarily obsessed, that he didn't remember when I awakened him?"

"Yes, but—"

"It means that certain entities across the river, whom I might call evil companions of that unfortunate woman, are getting alarmed. That was their little challenge to us. But when you face the elementals boldly, they slink away."

IT was a little after twelve when we adjourned to the bedroom for the séance. French had been quite himself ever since his outburst, of which it was evident he retained no recollection. The doctor had given Mrs. French a pretty strong hypodermic of morphine, and she was fast asleep. In the crib beside her lay Elsie, clasping the doll in her arms.

Our preparations were simple. A clothes closet in the corner of the room served as the dark cabinet, and Charlie was ensconced there in a chair, a broad grin on his yellow face. I am positive he had not the least idea what happened when he was entranced, but just what he thought he was doing I had never been able to make out. Three chairs were set out in front of the cabinet, but in such a way as to bring the child's bed—the foot of it—into the semi-circle. Then the lights were extinguished, and presently Charlie began to moan and breathe heavily.

It was a scene to which I was well accustomed. In a little while the communications from Julius Caesar and the rest of them would begin. Some mediums have their guides who assume control and chase away these mischievous entities, but for some reason or other Charlie had always been an open telephone line, and we had had to

rely entirely upon our judgment as to the validity of what came through.

But each medium has his peculiarities, and, on the other hand, Charlie Wing was that rare being, a materializing one. I had seen too much to doubt this. I had seen the ectoplasmic swirls take the forms of heads and limbs, and we had a nice little collection of photographs which, as Merrick had often said, were too obviously genuine to carry the slightest weight with persons whose judgments were preconceived.

On this occasion I waited with more anxiety than ever before; with a feeling of anxiety that approached terror. I had seen by the look on Merrick's face before the lights went off that he was in a state of extreme tension.

And as I sat there I was wondering about the open grave, and what he had expected to find in it.

THE manifestations came suddenly. From Charlie's lips issued a confused muttering, as of a number of persons all trying to talk at once, struggling, jostling each other. If that was fake, it was the work of a master. Then a deep voice, a man's voice, "Get away from here, all of you!" And then, more startling in its dramatic quality, "Merrick! Merrick! Where are you! The light is blinding me! I can't—hold on—for long."

"I'm here!" said Merrick.

"I'm—I'm—" Again the eternal difficulty of getting a name through. "The fog—the rain—sunshine—barometer—"

"Yes, I know you, Weathermore!"

"Yes, Weathermore. I—I'm bewildered—coming back. So difficult! I've tried to tell her, but she doesn't understand. They're fooling her, that crowd of devils round her, and she's good. She's good,

but she doesn't understand. I want to help him—confrère—painter—gay Paree—”

“Yes, yes! Go on!”

“They're stronger than me. I—can't—hold on—”

The voice ended abruptly in a high-pitched cry like a woman's. Then followed utter silence, save for the heavy, stertorous breathing that came from the lips of Millicent French, and from her husband's. Both were asleep, but this time I had no inclination to sleep. I sat crouched up in my chair, oppressed by the most awful fear that I have ever felt. It was as if all the devils in hell were about to launch themselves into the room.

Faintly, very faintly in the little light that filtered through the window, I could see Charlie twisting and squirming in his chair. Now and again a moan broke from his lips, but no voice came from it.

I knew what that silence meant. It was the prelude to a materialization. With Charlie—I don't know how it is with other mediums—voices and materializations never came simultaneously. It was as if he needed all his powers for the one thing or the other.

Stronger and stronger came that sense of evil. It seemed to me now as if the doctor and I bore the whole burden of the fight upon our shoulders.

IT was beginning to grow luminous within the closet. Slowly Charlie's face was beginning to stand out against the background of darkness. It was covered with a filmy cloud, slightly self-luminous, a cloud that was almost imperceptibly detaching itself and gathering itself together.

Little ripples seemed to be running through it in all directions, as if it was a mass of unstable jelly, so fast that it was impossible to say which way the cloud was

moving. It circled about the face of the entranced man, now right, now left of him, forming into little swirls that momentarily seemed to take the form of a face, of an arm thrust out through a mass of draperies, and then resolved itself again into an undifferentiated mass. And then I heard a sound behind me—the creaking of bed springs.

I glanced back. Millicent French was rising from the bed. But she was rising as one might picture the dead rising upon the Day of Judgment. And that sight still haunts my memory as the most dreadful of all the things I saw that night.

Jerkily, foot by foot, she rose, till she was seated on the edge of the bed. Then, with the same jerky succession of movements, she was crouching upon the floor beside it. She was rising, her knees had straightened, and she now stood upright. And now she was moving toward the cabinet, with arms extended stiffly in front of her; and, dark though it was, I could see that every muscle of her body was set in the rigor of complete catalepsy.

FORWARD, slowly, hesitantly, as a soul awaiting judgment might move toward the dread seat, moved Millicent. She was coming straight toward us, and I looked at the doctor, not knowing whether he meant to break the circle and let her pass through. But instead of passing me, she moved toward the foot of the child's bed and stood there, arms still outstretched, but as if in protection.

And then I saw the ectoplasm within the cupboard take shape with astounding rapidity. One instant it was a whirling cloud—the next, it had taken the form of a young woman!

A wraith, a phantom built up for the time by the personality behind

it. Only a phantom, for it was indistinct at the edges, and I could see that the trailing draperies concealed gaps that had not been covered—at the back of the head, the back of the body. It was barely more than two-dimensional, a flattened silhouette, and yet curiously, horribly real.

I never read or saw of any more stupendous drama than the one enacted in pantomime before me, as the dead woman and the living one confronted each other. And to my mind the chief horror of it was this, that the two, the living and dead, were merely masks.

Of the dead woman, this was certainly the case. But of the living, it was also true, for what was Millicent French but a shell, a mask, almost as devitalized as the thing that faced her? In stark horror I watched the two draw near, until the outstretched arms of the living woman almost touched the dead one inside the circle.

NOT a sound came from either, but I could see a look of fear growing in Millicent's eyes. And her arms, which had been extended in front of her, were being bent back until they were stretched out horizontally in front of the crib. I saw an expression begin to dawn upon the face of the ghoul, a look of triumph, of ecstasy. . . .

Then suddenly she was gone! There was only the living woman standing at the foot of the crib. But her arms were jerking downward, and then, in the same rigid catalepsy, she stood, a marble statue, to all appearance, inanimate.

There was now no objective phenomenon within the room. The cloud of ectoplasm that had been about Charlie's head had vanished. For a moment I thought that the séance was over, that Merrick had banished the phantom and robbed it of its power.

Then I saw Merrick glance back toward the crib, and I saw something that almost drove the last remnant of sanity from my brain.

For the doll that the child had clasped all night in her arms had grown somehow swollen—monstrously distended. The face had grown larger, the lips redder, and the eyelids seemed to tremble, while the eyes beneath them seemed to reflect an evil light.

Then, even as I looked, a tremor ran through the doll's body. It stirred, it turned, and those red lips were implanted full upon little Elsie's!

MERRICK'S hand fell upon my wrist with a grip of steel. "Keep your head, Benson," he whispered. "We've won! We've won! God, I scarcely dared hope that she would take the lure! Keep by me!"

As he spoke I was conscious that the evil which had oppressed me had vanished, and it was like the lifting of a heavy cloud. I could see Charlie slumped forward in his seat. Millicent French had collapsed across the bed; her husband was still breathing heavily in his chair. Quietly I stepped toward the crib and looked down at the hellish thing that lay clasped in Elsie's arms.

It was alive! It was flesh and blood, and yet through the flesh I seemed to see the framework of the doll. But it was alive, for there was a flush of blood in the cheeks, and the horrible red lips were growing redder.

And as I looked I seemed to see the child grow even more waxen, as if its life-blood was being drained into the doll's body.

"Keep your head, Benson," whispered Merrick to me again, and stepped to the side of the crib. He stooped and placed his hands about the monstrous thing at Elsie's side.

It was smiling evilly, and, when Merrick tried to pick it up, it still clung to the child with its stumpy hands, and the red lips were withdrawn with an audible suction. It lay in Merrick's arms, squirming and still smiling.

"Come!" he whispered to me; and, carrying the horrible burden, he made his way out of the house. I strode after him over the field. I knew where he was going now, and I could hear the thing making plaintive little mewling noises, which grew fainter, until, by the time we reached the graveyard it had grown silent.

THE moon had nearly set, but by the light of it I could still see the thing, faintly squirming. The eyelids opened, and it looked up piteously into Merrick's face.

Merrick poised himself upon the edge of the open grave and hurled it down into the coffin. I heard the yielding thud, as of flesh, as it struck the bottom.

"The spade, Benson, the spade!" he called, as he jumped down after it and began frantically adjusting the lid of the coffin.

I leaped down after him, spade in hand. A plaintive mewling was coming from within the coffin. There were feeble blows against the lid. The most dreadful thing of all was the appearance of a stumpy hand, that seemed half flesh, half wax, between coffin and lid. Merrick thrust it back with the edge of the spade, and began dragging down the earth from the sides. And all the while that piteous mewling went on, till the increasing weight of the earth smothered it.

But I can tell no more. I only know that I crouched beside the grave, watching Merrick at work, watching him stamping down the shovelled-in earth, and gradually growing taller, until at length he

emerged, and only a low mound, as before, marked the site of his work.

He had carefully cut away the sods, and these he now replaced and stamped down in turn. As far as I was able to judge in the faint moonlight, no evidences remained that the grave had been tampered with.

THEN only did Merrick drop on the grass beside me and wipe away the sweat that streamed from his forehead. For a while he was too exhausted to talk.

"Well, we've won," he said at length. "It's all over."

I said nothing, and he went on, "You understood, didn't you, Benson? She—the dead woman—had wanted a child. So little Elsie's doll became the focus of all the devil's work that was taking place. It was the doll that was draining the child's life-blood nightly, although it was only when Charlie Wing came on the scene that the spirit was able to materialize into a definite shape.

"You must not think that that poor woman was aware of what she was doing. But there are always elementals ready to lend their aid to anything and everything that affords them their supreme desire of coming into touch with mortals.

"I saw that it was touch and go. The only hope lay in materializing this astral shell of the dead woman—a thing entirely automatic and devoid of knowledge or responsibility. I hoped that it would gravitate automatically to the doll instead of returning to the astral sphere, ready to plague the Frenches again. That hope was gratified, and now, six feet beneath the earth, it will slowly molder until its final dissolution sets the dead woman free from the earth-bound condition into which her love and desires plunged her."

"**D**OCTOR, I'm feeling so much better to-day, and Elsie seems better too, though she's so weak. I've got a feeling that the worst is over, and that we're both going to get better from now on."

"I can assure you of it, Mrs. French," answered the doctor. "I am so certain of it, that Benson and I are starting back to town this morning. If you should need us again, we are at your disposal, but I'm quite sure everything will be fine from now on."

"That must have been wonderful medicine you gave us," said Millicent vaguely. "But do you know, Elsie's hidden her doll away and won't tell me where she's put it. Where's dolly, darling?" she asked, as the child toddled into the room toward her mother.

"Baby buried old dolly, nasty old dolly," answered little Elsie. "Baby

buried horrid old dolly last night, in the ground."

"Now, did you ever hear such fancies?" asked Millicent. "Last night she wouldn't go to sleep without her doll, and now she hates it."

"I've got that feeling, too," said French, as we stood at the door. "You hypnotized us all last night, didn't you, Doctor? I know I slept like a top, and I'm feeling like a different man. But I'm still afraid for Millicent and the child."

"Nothing more to be afraid of, if you remember my warning, French," replied the doctor. "One life at a time, now and henceforward."

"All leady, Mastah!" came Charlie's cheerful voice from the car.

So, with a final wave of the hand, Merrick stepped out into the bright sunlight, and I followed him.

West England's Little Folk

PRACTICALLY every country of the Old World has its legends of the fairies or other little folk, and even within one country the names and kinds and powers of these little creatures vary sometimes considerably. Of those which are remembered in the west of England there are at least five distinct varieties.

The Small People were believed by many to be the spirits of the people who inhabited Cornwall many thousands of years ago. Not good enough to inherit the joys of heaven, and yet too good to be condemned to the eternal fires of hell, they were said to be "poor innocents." When they first came to that land they were much larger than they later became, for all the time they were there they got smaller and smaller; and finally they were destined to turn into ants, and then, later, to vanish from the face of the earth.

These Small People were exceedingly playful among themselves, but were usually demure when aware of watching human eyes. Frequently they performed friendly acts and otherwise aided those humans they took a fancy to.

The Spriggans in some ways appear to be offshoots from the family of Trolls of Sweden and Denmark, and were a much different class of beings. They were found only around cairns, cromlechs, burrows or detached stones, and it was unlucky for mortals to meddle with them. They were a very mischievous and

thievish tribe. Whenever a house was robbed, a child stolen or cattle carried away, it was the work of the Spriggans. Whatever commotion occurred in earth, air or water was put down to them.

The Pixies were most mischievous and unsociable fairies. Their favorite prank was to entice people into the bogs by appearing like the light from a cottage window, or the light from a carried lantern. Many were the charms that had to be used against them. It was common knowledge that no Pixie could harm a man if his coat were turned inside out; indeed it became a common practice for persons who had to go from village to village at night to wear their jackets so turned.

The Knockers were said to be the sprites of the mines, and correspond to the Kobals of the German mines and the Trolls. They were supposed to be the souls of Jews who formerly worked the tin mines of Cornwall, and were not allowed to rest because of their wicked practices as tinnners.

The Brownies were purely household sprites. They were kindly and good, and devoted themselves to benefit the families with whom they had taken up their abode. They were summoned especially on the occasion of the swarming of the bees, at which time the hive-tender used to seize a tin pan and, beating it, call loudly, "Brownie! Brownie!" until the good Brownie heard and made the bees settle.



Then Romain began to wash his hands.

The Awful Injustice

By S. B. H. Hurst

HE sat in the easy chair in my office, facing me. The light from the window by my desk showed his strong face, his fine physique. I saw a man of forty. Never in all my years of practice in nervous and mental diseases

had I seen a more worried face.

"I am Judge Romain, Doctor," he said, after a short while.

I bowed, somewhat startled, for Judge Romain was the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of our neighbor State. I murmured the usual platitudes.

The turgid depths of a tortured human soul give up a secret memory—terrific—reincarnate.

"And what seems to be your trouble, Judge?" I asked.

The worry in his face increased, like a darker cloud crossing the sky on a dark day. I saw fear in the large grey eyes, and when he answered there was a shiver he could not inhibit.

"Doctor," he answered, "the court records do not show it, and there have been no complaints or charges against me, but—I tell you, Doctor, that I have been guilty of the most awful injustice, and the thought of what I have done is killing me; driving me insane!"

I leaned forward and took his pulse. I spoke soothingly. I said:

"Tell me all about it, very quietly. Tell me, first, when you did this injustice, and upon whom."

"My God, Doctor!" he exclaimed, "I don't know! That's the hell of it! I don't know when I did it, or who the victim was!"

I let go his wrist. Then I gave him a cigar and lit one myself. I saw a case of phobia. It might be easy to relieve the judge, or it might be difficult, but in either case I believed I could do it.

"**W**HEN did you first begin to believe you had committed an injustice?" I asked.

"Ever since I can remember I have been haunted by the belief. But it gets worse. I mean that it is driving me mad. That's why I came to you. You see, Doctor, I have never mentioned this to a soul until now. When I was a boy I was tempted to tell about it to my father, but I thought it would be silly. All these years I have kept this horror to myself—like a murderer, afraid he will be found out. My God, Doctor, I believe I was a murderer!"

His voice rose nearly to a scream.

"Hush! Hush!" I said sternly. "You are letting yourself go! Whatever this phobia is, it's no use los-

ing control of yourself. Get a grip on your nerves. The entire thing is, obviously, due to some slight bit of meanness when you were a little child. You treated some playmate unkindly, and then suppressed the desire to make amends or say you were sorry. The years of suppression just fertilized the phobia. Had you told your father about it you would have been well now."

"But what could I have told him when I don't know what I did?" he wailed.

"Well," I answered, "you could at least have found relief in confession of general things. But never mind that now. What we have to make is a psycho-analysis. You must help me by writing down all you can remember of your dreams, and you must keep nothing back from me. When I ask you questions, answer freely and fully: there must be no resistance to my analysis. I will soon have you well. Quit worrying. And get that absurd murder feeling out of your system. How could you have murdered anyone and then forgotten when you did it and who you killed—when you have had this fear-belief since babyhood? Babies don't murder, you know. Brace up. I think this will prove a very simple case."

I little dreamed how wrong I was when I said that!

AT the outset I reviewed Judge Romain's life. It was, apparently, flawless. He was not married, and his ways were the ways of one of those fine priests whose faces show their cleanness. In this, from the medical viewpoint, I sought the pathological, but failed to find it. Then came the obvious question: Why had he, when laboring under this feeling of having been unjust, studied law and sought, and won, the election to the judgeship?

"I felt I had to be a judge,

Doctor," he told me simply. This, to a doctor, was indicative.

"You *felt* you had to become a judge?" I asked.

"Yes. I always felt that way. The feeling that I had to become a judge has always been with me; always—just like the feeling that I have been unjust! It is, and was, part of me! And it was surprisingly easy to gratify that feeling. The way seemed smoothed for me. I had no trouble at all winning the election to the Superior Judgeship. Then a Supreme Court judge died, and the Governor appointed me. The next election confirmed me in office. I have been a judge ever since."

Then I tried him with word tests, but I found no evasions. His time-reactions indicated no suppression; he was frank, never evasive. But through everything there was his strange obsession. He had been terribly unjust, and the sting of what he called his "sin" at times lashed him into a mild hysteria in which he called himself a murderer.

I next investigated his dreams. I say "investigated," but as a matter of fact there were no dreams to consider. The judge could never remember having a dream. He had them, of course, but they made no impression on his memory, and were lost at his waking.

All this took time, and the condition of the judge grew worse. He had to take a vacation. He was losing any faith he may have had in me, and I could hardly blame him. And with his loss of faith came an utter hopelessness. He did not believe he ever could be cured, and he was certain he was going insane. He was going insane. I became badly worried myself.

THEN one day he came to me with a suggestion. Like a man drowning and grasping at a straw, it seemed to me.

"You have heard of Doctor Sykes?" he asked.

"That quack?" I exclaimed contemptuously.

"Quack or not, I am going to try him," said the judge. "I have heard that he has done wonderful things. But I have also heard that he has done things he should not have done. Some people are afraid of him; they say he uses hypnotism. I am going to him, but I feel a bit afraid myself, so I want you to come with me. The man is a doctor: it's just a referred case."

Well, the judge might take that view of it, but I couldn't—for two reasons. The first was my own dislike of referring a case to a notorious quack, whose ability I considered to be much less than my own; and this involved the second, which was my own reputation and my responsibility for my patient, the judge. Not that I considered hypnotism harmful in skilled hands; in fact I have used it myself. No, it was the strange beliefs held by Doctor Sykes which, coupled with his hypnotic efforts, repelled me. Sykes had been voted out of the medical society for unethical conduct, you see.

"Better not go to Sykes," I said. "If you wish a consultation there are other mental specialists in whom I have confidence."

The voice of the judge rose in that hysteria which always came with it.

"And the other specialist will use the same methods you have used—and have the same 'success.' I want to get well, not be experimented upon like a guinea pig!"

One of the first things a doctor has to learn when he becomes a specialist in mental diseases is not to be offended by anything his patients may say. They can't help it, you see. They are as unable to control their outbursts as a man is unable to control a scream at

the moment he breaks a thigh. So I merely said:

"You are set upon consulting Sykes?"

"I am. But I want you with me. You see, Doctor, your reputation is assured. The lawyer in me demands credentials. But as a sick man I want to get well. This shyster may have something—and he may not be a shyster, after all. So, Doctor, for God's sake come with me! You can tell Sykes what you have tried, and so save him from trying it. Forget ethics and dislikes, and think of me—me, suffering like a murderer all these years!"

Well, while I hadn't the slightest faith in Sykes, I had a whole lot of sympathy for Romain. I picked up the phone, and got Sykes' number; and the upshot was that Sykes asked me to bring my patient over right away because it happened to be the only free hour he had until late in the evening. It was then about four on a dark winter afternoon. As we left my office and reached the street a cold little wind sprung up, and it whined eerily among the buildings.

I DID not relish the expression on Sykes' face when we arrived: I had been somewhat condemnatory in my remarks concerning him at the medical society meeting, you see. He smiled, sarcastically it seemed. He was getting a kick at my coming: at my surrender to his ability, was the way he looked at it. I had to think of my patient, and feel that what I had done was pure altruism—I had to do this to make myself comfortable when facing that smile of Sykes.

But he was politeness itself. He sat Romain down in a big easy chair facing the window. There was no high building across the street, and the view Romain had was of a cloudy evening fast getting dark, the heavy sky threatening a storm

and the eery wind heralding its coming. Sykes' office was very simply furnished—just a small desk, a big chair for the patient, the desk chair and one other. There was a small portable wash basin in a corner, which I understood he used in some way in his hypnotic experiments. I told Sykes all I could about Romain's obsession, and what I had tried to do to cure it.

"It's a difficult case, Doctor," I concluded. "I have never seen one quite like it."

"I have cured a number of such cases," was Sykes' reply.

I thought he was just bragging, and smiled as sarcastically as he could have done himself.

"You see," he went on, "I permit myself a far wider field for probing than you do—a field about which—pardon my bluntness—you know nothing. Further, you deny the existence of this field. Strange, is it not? How men of fair intelligence will admit their ignorance, and then blatantly deny the existence of a certain field of knowledge simply because they know nothing about it?"

"I have heard that you dabble in the occult," I retorted. "I have met others who did so. It is a fertile field for faking—and making money."

He laughed. I hated him for that laugh!

"Never mind," he said. "You brought the judge to me for help—your methods having failed; so let's not fight. Your patient will walk out of this office in half an hour—cured!"

"What?"

I exclaimed the word, for the man's self confidence was stunning.

"Please do not communicate your lack of faith—and knowledge—to the judge," Sykes answered with asperity. He turned to Romain, who had been watching us and listening anxiously. "With your permission,

my dear Judge, I will put you into a light sleep."

Romain looked at me. I nodded.

"A light hypnotic sleep cannot hurt you. Even if you were in the hands of an unskilled operator, and I were not present, you would wake naturally after a little time. Relax, and allow Doctor Sykes to put you to sleep."

SYKES had put the basin of water by the head of the big chair in which the judge was relaxing. I smiled. The basin looked like some sort of stage setting, the kind of thing resorted to by charlatans. I saw no need for it.

The light of the sky had gone altogether, and now Sykes snapped off the lights. I looked out of the window, which Romain was facing, and saw the angry snow clouds lashing and twisting in the wind, which had grown to a full gale. Then I turned back to the judge. Sykes was gently pressing his fingers on Romain's closed eyes, and speaking soothingly. I had to admit that he was a clever operator. He had won the judge's confidence immediately—of course he was helped by my being there—and in a few minutes Romain lay back relaxed in the deep chair, quietly sleeping. But his face had not relaxed. There was on it the same terrible worry that lurks upon the brink of the horrible swamp of insanity.

This worry, this expression of face, I could just see as I bent over the chair. Then Sykes beckoned me away, over to the window.

"We will turn our backs on him while we talk. Every little care helps," said Sykes.

So we turned our backs upon the chair and the hypnotized judge, and looked out over the lights of the city at the growing storm.

"I should tell you," whispered Sykes, "that this 'phobia' of Romain's is *not* a matter of his late

infancy. Your theory that he was unjust to a playmate is wrong. The awful sense of injustice, amounting to and indicating murder as being involved, is too great for any childhood error. No childhood emotion could leave such a terrible psychic scar. No, the scar is the result of a deliberate act of a mature man. The judge was unjust, cruel, to some one who was in his power *during a previous life on this earth!*"

I laughed.

"Please be quiet," said Sykes sternly. "If you are ignorant of the subject of reincarnation and, therefore, do not agree with me, at least be courteous about it. Buddha, Plato, the fathers of the early Christian church, countless other men of as much intelligence as yourself have endorsed the idea of reincarnation, of a long series of lives lived by every one of us. So don't act like a schoolboy, but watch me prove my case."

"PROVE it!" I said.

"Certainly! I will find out just what Judge Romain did to cause him this continued agony of remorse—and cure him. The law is the same as in other phobias: once the patient remembers what caused the fear and misery, he becomes well. I can demonstrate to you a definite psychic metabolism; and, when I show Romain just what is hurting him, my recalling the thing to him in his hypnotized state will act upon his psyche as an emetic acts upon a stomach: he will get rid of the cause of his disturbance."

Somehow—Sykes spoke so convincingly—I ceased being sarcastic. I knew, of course, that reincarnation was rot—just a silly idea of superstitious people—but Sykes was like a clever salesman: he got my interest. I even thought that he might help Romain; although I knew that if he did, it would be by

hypnosis and ordinary suggestion, and not by any bringing up of something supposed to have happened in a previous existence. Quacks always try to adopt the miraculous, you know. They appeal to ignorance and the marvelous.

"Imagine a thousand electric light poles stretching across a barren, lifeless desert," went on Sykes, "and every pole separated from the other by fifteen hundred feet. These poles stretch out into the dimming distance, and they are all out of sight of a man who is standing at the edge of the desert with a thin wire in his hand. This wire stretches from the man's hand to the nearest pole, and from that to the next and so on; the connection is never broken. But the man lacks the power to send electricity from his hand to the first pole, let alone the others. He does not believe that there are any poles stretching across the desert, and, like you, he is so myopic that he cannot see the wire he holds in his hand.

"For every pole represents a life the man has lived on earth, and the wire is his memory of those lives—if he would only learn how to use it. Though a few of us have learned, the majority deny sarcastically that any wire, let alone poles, exists. Under hypnosis I will waken the memory of the judge. I will give him power to transmit along the wire to the first pole, to the second—on to the pole which represents the life during which he was murderously unjust. He will remember. Then I will awaken him—cured!"

"Sounds interesting," I admitted. "And, the way you put it, logical. But what does the desert represent, and the fifteen hundred feet between every pole?"

"The desert represents the something we call *time*, which is without life," answered Sykes. "And the distance between the poles rep-

resents roughly the time between each life on earth—which is about fifteen hundred years. The time, however, varies widely."

HE turned to the judge, who was sleeping quietly.

"I will now put him into a deeper sleep," he said. "And for your benefit I will add that the practices of ordinary medical hypnotism are infantile. With the exception of myself, and one other, no doctor in America realizes the full scope of hypnosis. Watch!"

He made some passes across Romain's face.

"He is now going back through time," said Sykes.

"More faking!" I thought, but said nothing.

Sykes continued the passes. Then I was positively startled, for Romain made little noises, exactly like a hungry baby.

"He is now in that period of his existence when his mother nursed him," said Sykes in a matter of fact way. "I will make a few more passes and he will pass backward out of this life altogether."

This of course was sheer nonsense, but all the same I was greatly interested. That Romain did cease making those noises, and lay back in the chair as still as death, meant nothing, really; I mean it did not prove that Sykes was telling the truth. For although Sykes had not audibly suggested much, what he had said to me regarding Romain's going backward out of life might be sufficient to induce, under a skilled operator, the partial catalepsy in which he now lay.

But now Sykes was talking directly to Romain in an authoritative voice.

"Go back. Go back in memory along the silver thread that connects you with past lives. See, I give you power with which to remember! Remember when you did

that unjust act which still tortures you in vague memory. Remember clearly. Enact again your crime. Remember, and be well!"

THE result of this command was more than startling. It was horrible. You must remember that Romain was a grave judge of the Supreme Court; sick, of course, but still a man of self control. At Sykes' command he ceased to be that. He groaned and writhed in his chair like a man with a bullet in his abdomen.

And I saw that this was not what Doctor Sykes expected. I was filled with apprehension.

"Shall I switch on the light?" I whispered.

"No," answered Sykes in a strained voice. "To do that might kill him. Memory is electric, you know. We must work in the dark."

"Well," I answered angrily, "he is my patient, and I don't like to see him writhe or hear him groan. You are doing no good for him. Bring him out of it!"

"My God," gasped Sykes, "I can't! He is out of my control!"

"You bungling charlatan!" I almost shouted. "Try again! Don't lose your nerve!"

I was speaking, as it were, in self defence—trying to keep up my courage. For things terrible were happening. Not the mere groaning and twisting of Romain—such could be called *pathological*. No, it was something, something, many things—forgive me, but I must call those other happenings *supernatural*.

The wind screamed at the window. How fast the storm had grown! And Romain was standing up, his eyes closed. As Sykes again attempted to control him the judge waved him away with a splendid gesture of authority, and Sykes reeled back to me, by the window, shivering and sweating like a frightened horse.

BUT that was nothing. That was mere momentary terror, mere fear at his blundering, as it seemed. The terrible, the supernatural happening was an uncanny sense of *being in a crowd*.

In a crowd. Remember, there were only the three of us in that room, yet both Sykes and myself distinctly felt the presence of a mob—an angry howling mob. And that mob was screaming, howling, demanding—demanding something of Judge Romain. He seemed to face that mob. He seemed to have power he was afraid to use—because of what the mob might do. He seemed to vacillate between doing what his conscience told him to do and what the mob wanted him to do.

Was I insane? was Sykes insane?—sensing that unseen mob like that? Was the tortured Romain insane—his lips moving and uttering words in a language unknown to me—as he faced that unseen, howling mob? . . . Say we were insane, if you wish. *But it was surely not insanity that caused both Sykes and myself to bow our heads humbly at the Man we both felt, but could not see, at the Judge's side!*

Suddenly Romain seized the wash basin that had stood at the side of the chair filled with water. He lifted it, and faced the mob. Then he put down the stand in which the basin rested. And then he faced the mob, with the basin in front of him.

I caught myself muttering, trying to reduce the tremendous drama that Romain was re-acting to terms of everyday. I muttered:

"The basin of water: that indicated mysophobia, fear of dirt; in Freudian symbolism, fear of sin."

But I knew as I said it that I merely babbled to hide my fear.

Romain put his hands in the water. Again I bowed in reverence to that splendid, unseen Presence

who stood by Romain's side. Then Romain began to wash his hands. He spoke, and I needed no translator for the words he said:

"I am innocent of the blood of this Just Person: see ye to it!"

The mob howled joyfully.

And Sykes was shivering and

cringing at my side in the dark. "You see—he was Pilate! Pontius Pilate! From him came the sense of murder, of awful injustice on his soul!

"He cannot get well, for remembering what he did will only make him worse!"

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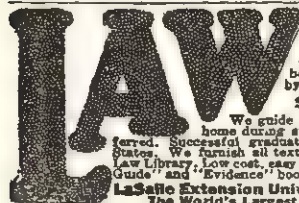
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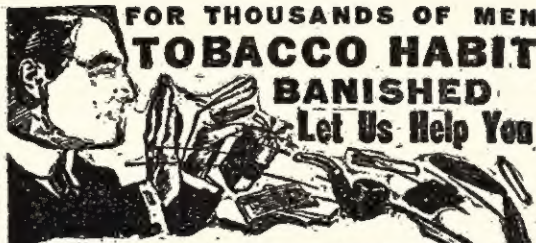
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Stop craving tobacco in any form. Tobacco Redeemer in most cases relieves all craving for it in a few days' time. Don't try to quit the tobacco habit unaided. It's often a losing fight against heavy odds, and may mean a distressing shock to the nervous system. Let Tobacco Redeemer help the habit to quit you. It is pleasant to use, acts quickly, and is thoroughly reliable.

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Tobacco Redeemer contains no habit-forming drugs of any kind. It is in no sense a substitute for tobacco. After finishing the treatment, there should be no desire to use tobacco again or to continue the use of the remedy. In case the treatment is not perfectly satisfactory, we will gladly refund any money paid. It makes not a particle of difference how long tobacco has been used, how much it is used, or in what form—whether it is cigars, cigarettes, pipe, plug, fine cut or snuff. In most cases, Tobacco Redeemer removes all craving for tobacco in any form in a very few days. And remember, it is offered with a positive money-back guarantee. Write today for our free booklet showing the injurious effect of tobacco upon the human system and convincing evidence that Tobacco Redeemer has relieved the craving for tobacco in thousands of cases.

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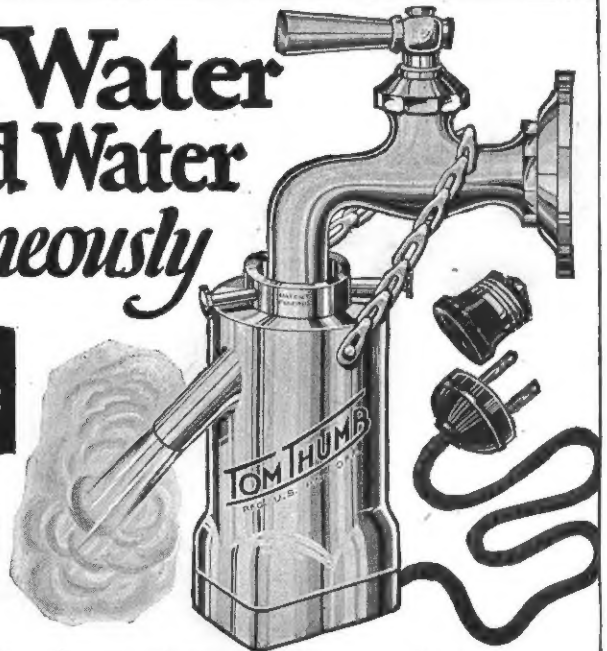
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Terminal Products Co., Inc.
Dept. 1609, 200 Hudson St.,
New York, N. Y.

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1. Enclosed find money order for \$2.75. Please send me one Tom Thumb Junior, order blanks and selling information. It is understood upon receipt of this sample outfit I will be permitted to take orders and collect \$1.00 cash deposit for every Tom Thumb, Jr. I sell, or \$1.50 for every Tom Thumb, Sr. I sell. It is understood I will send the orders to you and you will ship direct to my customers C.O.D. for the balance.

2. I would like to have additional information before acting as one of your agents. Please send this by return mail free of obligation.

Name

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